



English edition

# DINAMICA

La Rivista

TAI CHI CHUAN E ARTI ASSOCIATE

N. 2 - June 2016

太極拳







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by Anna Siniscalco

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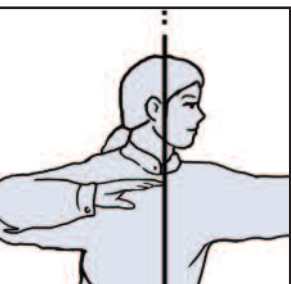


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Dinamica - Tai Chi Chuan and Arti associate A.S.D has been established by people who are willing to activate and share their potential through Tai Chi Chuan, arts and psychophysical disciplines as: meditation, breathing techniques, Qi Gong, Taoist Yoga (Tao Yin).

Dinamica is affiliate to the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association (IYFTCCA©). Its aim is to promote Tai Chi Chuan and give the opportunity to know and practice traditional Tai Chi Chuan following the methodology and teachings of Master Yang Jun, 5th generation lineage holder from the creator of Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.

Dear Readers,

The first issue of **Dinamica, the magazine** has been welcome with great enthusiasm, thus rewarding the efforts and generosity of our members and supporters.

We are heading towards summer and many courses are coming to an end for their summer break, so maybe you'll have more time to spend reading.

Here are the topics you will find in this issue.

In the yin and yang section a thought-provoking article about the wise men's freedom, while in the Herbs and Plants from the World you will learn more about a protagonist of the Far Western archaic culture, Shamanism.

Cinzia Catena, talking about Pottery Art and Craft, takes us back to the East, telling us the origin of Raku, the technique chosen to make cups for the Tea Ceremony.

For Tai Chi Chuan practitioners, the physicist and instructor Francesco Belli presents a detailed analysis of the rotating movements in the 103 Form from the scientific point of view.

On the cover, "Angels practicing Tai Chi Chuan in Rome"... why not?!

The editorial staff of Dinamica - the magazine, wishing you a wonderful summer, ends this issue in the light-hearted spirit of Lamberto Tomassini's comic strip.

Enjoy your reading and have fun!



**Anna Siniscalco**

*President Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan  
e Arti associate a.s.d.*

# Wise men's freedom

By Anna Siniscalco



Seneca said "**everyone wants to be happy, but they are then confused when it comes to deciding what makes them happy**".

The core of Seneca's statement is not just happiness per se, but the confusion which prevents the recognition of what makes us happy. In other words, if we are not happy, it is because we are confused. In the same way, from the Buddhist point of view, the lack of a clear vision of things, or even better of the reality of things, is responsible for suffering, the opposite of happiness.

More recently, Arthur Schopenhauer also said "**the safest way to become unhappy is to crave to be happier**". Referring to the dual aspect of happiness, he highlights how we relate to it, or so to say our inner state.

Who hasn't experienced that happiness is a high-peak condition rather than a permanent state of well-being? That happiness, if you see things from the 'extreme' yin-yang point of view, will sooner or later naturally generate its opposite? It becomes unconceivable to

separate happiness from the things which make us happy, from our inner state. As we take care of our body, our possessions, properties, reputation and career, we should take into the same consideration what sustains it all: ourselves.

We often spend time and energy trying to reach goals and make wishes come true, of which we don't even know the real substance, and, instead of being happy, we become frustrated. We are so confused by this vortex that we might do something wrong; we lose calmness, serenity and peace, as well as the selection criteria and values on which we can build psychological and emotional stability.

Seneca, Buddha and Schopenhauer (symbolic figures, as many other wise men and masters of East and West) all meet the natural and rightful desire of well-being and happiness of the human being, which is summarized in Socrate's most famous quote **"know thyself"**.

To realize that calmness and serenity are true inner treasures and to defend them, is the necessary task in order to develop an objective vision, to know ourselves, to separate us from what we think we are and to free us from bonds due to behavioural inheritance as well as values which do not belong to us. The only path to serenity goes through a deconditioning process, and serenity is the essence of our inner state.



Lao Tse

*"When the mind is still the spirit will be in a state of attention. If you go back to void, this will extinguish compulsive actions and will put your mind to quiet. This is the wise men's freedom."*

Wen Tzu (Classical Taoist)



## Ethno-pharmacology:

# Trichocereus pachanoi

By Pina Cuicchi

M.D.



Shamanism is a primitive magic-religious phenomena in which the shaman, that is the kingpin of it, settles his/her own experience on ecstasy. We can have three kinds of trance: shamanic, ominously, and mystical.

According to the South-American Indios communities, any kind of illness has a supernatural origin, and the shaman, either female or male, beholds the power to heal channeling healthy divinity or hell spirits. In order to succeed, he/she uses magic tools (drums, relics, charms) and takes the extract of a plant that has many properties, in this case a mezcalinic cactus originating from the Peruvian Andes area, where it grows at 2.000-3.000 m height: the *Trichocereus pachanoi*. Due to its properties, it is also known as "San Pedro" because the local shamans appeal to it as if it were saint Peter, powerful enough to possess heaven's keys. Even today, in the "cimora" form (a hallucinatory beverage), it is used in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador for fortune-telling and healing purposes. In its original habitat only, the San Pedro presents such an high concentrations of alkaloids.

So shaman is a priest and a "curandero" (healer) at the same time, thanks to the inner vision; the San Pedro's power make him/her able to see the transcendent causes of the events.

Linking with divinity is important not only as a religious rite, but also for the ritual needed

to eradicate illness from the patient. While the shaman is in trance, he/she applies the practice of lucid dream, during which he/she addresses divinity with queries about cures, penances, sacrifices to be done.

**Here we present a concise analysis of the native cultural system for the diagnostics through the San Pedro's use.**

#### *Gathering*

It takes place according to the strict observance of lunar cycle timing, that is during the favourable days and committing night hours.

While the *curandero* is gathering, he/she asks to San Pedro for a clear vision, able to let him/her find the precise remedy for the illness-to-be-eradicated.

#### *Place*

Wild plants are thought to be more powerful than the farmed ones; their power increase if the plants grow nearby ancient ruins, while it decrease if fire has touched them.

#### *Diet*

In order to gather the plant, one must avoid salt, pepper, garlic and sexual activities of any kind.

#### *Tool*

To cut the plant, they use a knife and this knife has no other purpose.

#### *Ritual for the beverage's formulation*

Dawn or sunset are the favourable time for the cooking.

The cauldron must have been purified; no onion, garlic and animal fat have to be cooked in it.

The boiling water can't overflow from the cauldron, otherwise the plant's power decreases. If a woman is committed to cook it, she can't be in her period.

In the meanwhile, formulas against evil spirits' actions are recited.







### *The sharing of San Pedro*

Shaman shares the beverage with all the presents using the same cup.

This cup is handed from one to another following the sun motion's direction.

At the end of the sharing, the *curandero* calls the plant's spirit to focus in his/her bones and brain in order to speak clearly.

The plant's power can show itself in the form of an animal (feline, snake, bird), or as a traditional dressed person, an Inca king, saint Peter, a "talking wind". Shaman is able to split his/her spirit from the body and travel through time and space.

Mystical-visionary results of the *Trichocereus pachanoi* are due to the presence of a powerful alkaloid, the mezcaltol, and its strong hallucinogenic effect. This kind of cactus beholds plenty different alkaloids, mainly with sedative-narcotic effects.

Talking about the physical effects, the mezcaltolinic experience follows its own schedule: about 30 minutes after the ingestion starts the first phase, distinguished by physical symptoms as nausea, vomit, vertigo, pulsation, perspiration, tremor, stomach cramps, and hot-cold feelings. About an hour later, experience's second stage begins: physical stress decreases fast to let emerge effects on the central nervous system and their typical sensory changes. Next 2-3 hours, the peak is reached, that is visual experience of hallucinations. Intoxication lasts 8-12 hours, and in the meantime the subject keeps a clear and complete memory of every and each event and feeling occurred during the experience.

We can always see a similar schedule of events in every subject; though each individual experience is unique because of the unpredictable content and direction of the subject's imagination.

The outside world's vision is altered as well as the space-time coordinates, therefore experience gains the typical feature of an epiphany. According the *curanderos*, the San Pedro is the "master" who conveys the initiate to another world and give him/her knowledge and power on natural forces.





# About conservation of angular momentum,

## i.e. some useful tip for an easier execution of the Tai Chi Chuan forms

**Francesco Belli**

*IYFTCCA Certified instructor and experimental physicist*

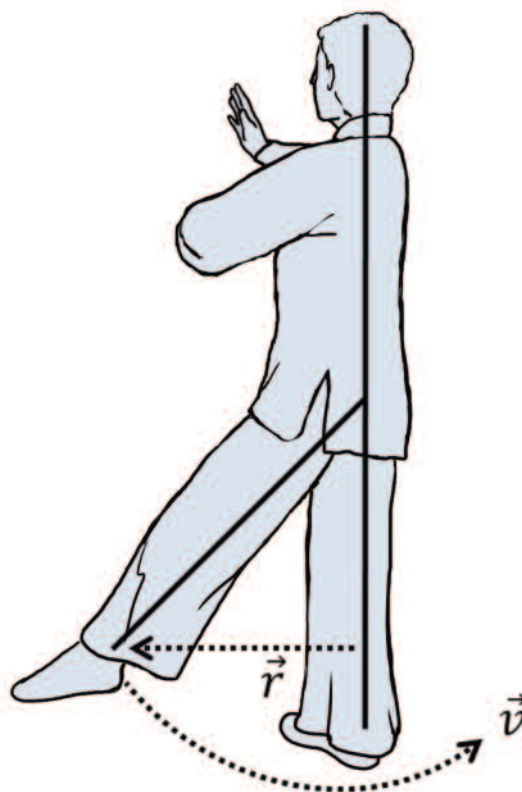
In the execution of the TCC forms (both hand or weapon ones) we have some movements in which we rotate on ourselves (even 360 degrees) pivoting on one foot, using the forefoot or the heel: keeping the balance (and therefore the rooting and proper body posture) during these stages may present some difficulties, also because instinctively we can make some mistakes that complicate things further. Eliminating such errors will allow us to perform these movements with a (sometimes surprising) greater ease.

We always start the rotation movements stretching the leg that does not touch the ground (forward if we have to turn on the heel, backwards if we are going to rotate pivoting on the forefoot). Examples of rotation on the heel are movements no. 39 of the 103 Hand Form ("Turn Body and Left Heel Kick") or no. 9 of the 67 Sword Form ("Swallow Returns to its Nest"); forefoot rotation examples are movements no. 51 of the 103 Hand Form ("Turn Body and Right Heel Kick") or no. 65 of the 67 Sword Form ("Plum Flowers Being Swept by the Wind").

There is a physical quantity, the "angular momentum", that remains constant ("conserved") for an isolated system. We define as "isolated" a system that is not subject to external forces, or at least it undergoes them but with zero resultant (e.g. the gravity that pushes us down and the resistance of the floor on which we rest, have on us, if the floor does not collapse, a zero resultant). Let's state immediately that when we rotate on one foot we are not really an isolated system because of the frictional force that we generate on the floor but, for the purposes of our discussion, we will assume it negligible (today we are practicing on a smooth parquet with light indoor shoes, when we are on the rough asphalt in fact things get more complicated). Regarding the conservation of angular momentum for an isolated system, without going into too much detail and avoiding mathematical formulas (which would be anyway very simple) we can explain it in a rough manner, but adequate enough for us, as follows: given a mass that revolves around an axis, the product of its **speed** ("**velocity**", ( $v$ )) and the **distance** ("**radius**", ( $r$ )) from the axis itself remains constant, i.e. if the mass approaches the axis, its velocity increases. An example that everyone has surely seen: a skater starts turning on herself on the tip of a skate then, without being able to give or receive any additional boost, suddenly increases her rotation speed by collecting her arms to herself (she decreases the distance of her own mass from the axis of rotation, thus increases the speed) until, extending them back, slows back to the initial speed.

What happens then if, starting with an extended leg, as we spin on ourselves we retrieve it to the body? You answered right: we speed up, and to maintain posture and balance during a speed change becomes much more difficult than doing it when our speed is constant.

To maintain the leg well-stretched until the end of the rotation is therefore an important detail not to be overlooked, but how to educate ourselves to do so? For example, to be aware of the application meaning of the movements that we perform helps a lot in accomplishing them properly (as G. Master Yang always says: "when you practice Forms always imagine that you are applying the movements with an opponent"): in the case of movements no. 39 of the 103 Hand Form or no. 9 of the 67 Sword Form mentioned above, the extended leg is performing a sweeping (imagine having to hit something close to the floor at the end of the turn), so lifting it off before the end of the movement would mean missing the target. In movements in which instead we rotate on the forefoot stretching the leg back, to be aware of what the leg is doing during the turn becomes more difficult, simply because we do not see it, and this is an example of how we need to learn to "feel" our body, acquiring awareness of it even without the use of sight. Another instinctive error that we can do in these movements is to tilt the head and torso forward to counterbalance the weight of the backwards extended leg: also in this case, during the turn it happens then to straighten ourselves drawing head and torso back to the rotation axis, with consequent increase of speed. Starting and staying with the upper part of the body as vertical as possible is instead one of the things that allows us to maintain good rooting and stability.



In order to continue our discussion, let's explain in a few words the difference between "**scalar**" and "**vector**" physical quantities: the first have a value but not a direction, the latter have both instead (the "weight" quantity of my body has a value (e.g. 170 lb) but not a direction; if I move my "speed" quantity will have both a value (e.g. 3 mph) and a direction, otherwise where would I move to?). In scientific formulas or figures such as those in this article, the vector quantities are recognized as shown with an arrow above them. Since the **angular momentum (L)** is a vector quantity, its preservation for an isolated system implies that it also retains its direction, which in the case of a rotating body is that of its own rotation axis. In other words: a body which rotates, if not perturbed, remains stable along its rotation axis. That's why a whirligig, as long as it wheels, remains standing, the same applies for a

bicycle wheels, and the same applies for ourselves when we are on one leg: if we do it while turning we can have a greater stability (or balance).

**How to gain benefit from the above in our TCC practice?** Let's take for example the movements no. 36 of the 103 Hand Form ("High Pat on Horse") and no. 25 of the 67 Sword Form ("Lion Shakes its Head, Left"). In both cases we come from previous movements ("Single Whip" for Hand Form and "Lotus Swirls Around in the Wind" for Sword Form) that end in bow stance, so with most of the weight forward, and we must then move to an empty stance by retrieving the front leg and transferring most of the weight on the back one. Another example for the Sword Form is the transition from movement no. 58 ("White Tiger Swings its Tail") to no. 59 ("Tiger Covers its Head") in which we even have to carry all the weight on the back leg, on which we get up. In the above examples, we can make the mistake of transferring the weight simply "pulling" it back, an uncomfortable action which forces us to use, against the

principles of our practice, a considerable amount of muscular strength. If we instead retract the front leg by starting the movement from a waist rotation (in all the above mentioned cases to the left), we find ourselves rotating on an axis and, as said above, we will be therefore much more stable, which it will allow us not to stiffen because of muscle strain. For the mentioned examples of the Sword Form, it is again a great help in their execution the awareness of the movement application. The waist rotation is in fact also necessary to lead and transmit energy to the sword slicing action: just remember to synchronize the upper and lower body, that is slicing together with weight shifting, and you are done!

Having said that, is much easier to perform than to try to figure out in words, so, simply experience it and see or, rather, learn to "feel" the differences between the different ways of movements execution: your body (if sufficiently and consciously trained) will remember these differences and will learn how to move in the best way.



**Good practice to everyone!!**



# Raku

**Cinzia Catena**

*Ceramist*



**R**aku techniques have been appreciated and used for a long time in contemporary pottery. The worn-out, not well-blended aspect of glazing, together with the changing and metallic enamels make them really interesting.

Even more fascinating is the origin of this technique which was chosen to create the cups for the tea ceremony, since they are connected to a philosophical and religious thinking. The Tea Ceremony, or the Way of Tea, was born in China and then developed in Japan. It goes back to an ancient religious ritual in Chan Buddhist monasteries, which was linked to the pause during meditation, when, gathered in front of the image of Buddha, they used to pass on to each other a cup of tea.

In Japan the ideals of Taoist and Buddhist philosophy mingled in time – forming the Zen Buddhism – thus influencing not only religious aspects, but also arts and life style, which transformed the simple habit of offering a beverage to a sophisticated and detailed ritual.

In fact, Taoism shows us a way to follow, it represents the spirit of the universal changing, and it is the search which can bring harmony between man and nature, in everyday life too. Respecting the laws of the universe without pretending to change them (no-action), it thus aim at putting man in the natural condition of the spontaneity in living.

Zen is partly applying Taoist rules: meditation, direct and real communication with nature, celebrating the sensitivity and the pleasure of the little things, the imperfect, the beauty not shown, the simple things and experiences (wabi-sabi), and of every kind of expression.

These philosophical-religious elements blended with the idea which defines art as a representation of harmony, or, even better, that **harmony is art** in all its expressions; from which the great importance and development of the Garden Art, Ikebana, calligraphy, martial arts and, precisely, the tea ceremony.

In the sixteenth century, in Japan the tea ceremony gained so much importance to become a real aesthetics religion called the 'Way of Tea', representing a way of living. The use of serving tea becomes a portrayal of the harmony and order ruling Nature, thus promoting an ideal hygiene, purity, courtesy spirit.

The tea ceremony includes many details, all carefully studied, which involve guests before they sit and drink tea. For example, the simple style of the clothes, no weapons, the

furniture and architecture of the room all reflect the principles of sobriety and naturalness, and this is why tools and cups in particular become essential. The objects used must express:

naturalness - complex simplicity - precariousness, because they contain the outlines of passing time; transformations, because the material communicates memory of the elements it was made of; harmony, because the form must make the use pleasant and the decoration must not be in contrast with the colour of the content.

Knowing this, it is clear how much the pottery technique used to make the cups is important.

In the second half of the sixteenth century the ceremony spread even more, and consequently the request of cups, until then imported from China or India. The master of tea Rikyu decides then to tell the potter Chojiro to find a pottery technique in line with the Zen pattern of construction, use and aesthetics.

It is told that the ceramist visited many pottery sites, till he found a technique which was used to make tiles for the roof which, in order to allow a fast and

continuous production, consisted in putting the tiles in a already very hot oven and taking them out white-hot, making them cool down on the ground in the open air. This procedure





caused the hand-manufactured a thermic shock and a not well-blended cooling, making them look worn-out and with unpredictable shades of colour.

Chojiro thus found the cooking technique, and the master of tea Rikyu told them to make the cups using a natural and very refractory clay, and handmade in order to let the artist express his spirit.

The cups thus created represented the transformation, the forms of the nature; they had an aspect of matter and they were worn-out by elements, fragile but strong, with unpredictable colours which enhanced the matter.

These cups were so much appreciated to gain an emperor's seal, to imprint on all the production, with the ideogram Raku. Freely translated, 'Raku' means 'enjoyment, joy, satisfaction, release', but its real origin is linked to 'Jurakudai', the name of the architectural style typical of the Momoyama period, characterized by the blooming of art and craft, the period in which Chojiro and Rikyu gave birth to Raku pottery.

In the Sixties this techniques arrived in the Western countries, undergoing many transformations by ceramists who experimented new reduction and smoking methods. It has been immediately appreciated for the novelty of its metallization and its colour effects, becoming an alternative pottery plying with air and fire, glorifying its matter aspect. In this way a technique used in Japan for more than 500 years has become for us westerners new pottery.





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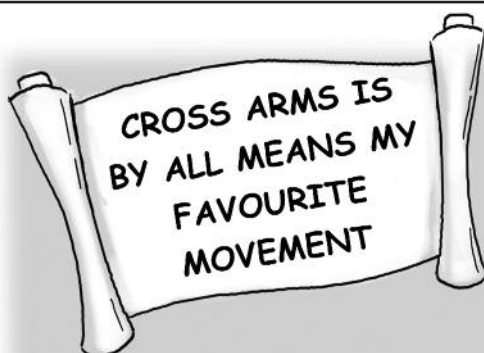
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