

Second Tuesday

A Newsletter about Tai Chi Books

I want to talk about the Tai Chi partner exercise called *Tui Shou* that has been popularly translated as "Pushing Hands"

I'd like to recommend a book by Stuart Alve Olson on this subject because, in the process of foregoing the standard translated term of "Pushing Hands", the author sheds light and puts forward a thoughtful and interesting analysis of the purpose and essence of this Tai Chi partner exercise.

The excerpts that I most enjoyed in the book had to do with his reasoning to translate *Tui Shou* as "Sensing Hands" instead of the more popular "Pushing Hands":

- ... The expression "pushing" carries the erroneous concept of force and exertion, something which is contrary to Tai Chi philosophy and practice. The language of any art form is crucial as it can influence our actions greatly. The divergence in perception and meanings of the words "pushing" and "sensing" is very wide. "Pushing implies" implies a hard and aggressive action, whereas "sensing" implies an action that is cautious and defensive, a type of introspective awareness.

He looks at how the characters for *Tui Shou* support this:

- The Chinese character for *Tui* is composed of two ideograms. The main radical on the left (Shou) simply means a "hand," and the ideogram to its right (Chui) means bird. The character *Tui* then presents the image of a "bird within the hand," and has commonly been translated with the meaning of "yielding," "pushing something upwards to release it," and "to examine something carefully."
- "*Shou*, the other ideogram in the compound of *Tui Shou*, also means "hand," but can also carry the meaning of "skill," "effort," and "action."

- Therefore, *Tui Shou* could likewise, and more precisely, be translated as “Sensing Skills.” I feel, however, that the clearest and most appropriate translation for *Tui Shou* is that of “Sensing Hands.”

The author then focuses on the importance of how we use our hands when practising Tai Chi to further support his translation of “Sensing Hands” rather than “Sensing Skills”.

- The hands in Tai Chi, like the antenna of an insect or the whiskers of a cat, act more as sensors than as instruments of strength. Energy is expressed and issues through them. They are not the source of the energy itself, no more than the tip of a whip is the source of the energy it emits... Hands in Tai Chi are simultaneously the receptors of information and the transmitters of responding to that information.

Thinking of *Tui Shou* as Sensing Hands helps focus your mind-intent on the fact that Tai Chi practitioners to not use your hands and arms with muscular strengthen.

I'd like to finish this short book review with the author's insistence that your Tai Chi skills and progression will be greatly deterred if you forget that Tai Chi is a Yin (yielding) art:

- In Chinese thought, water (a Yin substance) is far stronger than a rock (a Yang object). Water overcomes everything. Yielding overcomes the resistant, soft overcomes the hard – we can see this everywhere in Nature. Tai Chi is simply a means of imitating this Yin force of nature.

The book is called **Tai Ji Tui Shou** by Stuart Alve Olson.

Enjoy!

Elena

Elena Moreno

Reader and Book Collector of Tai Chi Books.

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