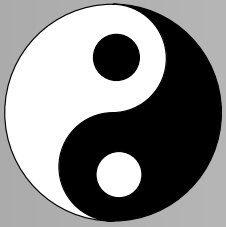


The Language of Tai Chi: Understanding the Meaning of Key Terms



太极

Wade-Giles: *T'ai Chi*

Pinyin: *Tàijí*

translated as:

“Supreme Ultimate”

Commonly called the ‘YinYang symbol’ in Western countries. It represents complementary aspects that work together to create balance in the universe.

The character "Ji" or "Chi" 极 is not to be confused with the Character "Qi" or "Ch'i" 氣. They have two different meanings.

太极拳



Wade-Giles: *T'ai chi ch'üan*

Pinyin: *Tàijí quán*

“Supreme Ultimate Boxing”

The translation of the name ‘T'ai chi ch'üan’ can be misleading, as it suggests that Tai Chi is the ‘supreme ultimate’ martial art. In reality, the name refers to a style or method based on the principles of change and transformation, and does not necessarily imply superiority over other martial arts.



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Wade-Giles: *Ch'i*

Pinyin: *Qì*

氣

Often incorrectly translated as “energy”*, this word is not to be confused with the character 极 (“Chi” or “Ji”) found in the name T'ai chi ch'üan (Tàijí quán). They have two different meanings.

The character 氣 is now referred to as the “traditional” form, as opposed to the simplified form which is used in China. It originated in the Zhou Dynasty as Seal Script or Zhuànshū (篆书).



“Qi” - Seal Script, used during the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE - 256 BCE)

气

The “simplified” character for “Qi” was officially adopted in the 1950's, but it actually dates back to the Oracle Bone Script Jiǎgǔwén (甲骨文) and was used during the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BCE - 1046 BCE).



“Qi” - Oracle Bone, Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BCE - 1046 BCE)



“Qi” - Bronze Script, Shang Dynasty to the early Western Zhou Dynasty (1600 BCE to 771 BCE)

*“The interpretation of qi 氣 as “energy”... lacks any historical basis”. Unschuld, P. & Tessenow, H. (2011), *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen*, University of California Press (p. 20).