



Linda's T'ai Chi Weekly Handout August 27, 2023

The Snake and the Crane



I love a good story. Don't you? Story telling is a fundamental part of being human. Stories create connections and emotional bonding. Stories pass on important information from one generation to another, among family members, among a society. From the early cave paintings, humans have been telling stories. Some of the stories are factual. Some are not but designed to be a metaphor for something that is important to the society and community. Most stories are a mix of truth and folklore.

One such story in T'ai Chi is the story about the snake and the crane. I have been talking about this in the classes this past week as it highlights the basic movements of T'ai Chi. In fighting, the Snake represents small, coiling movements – or small frame movements. And the Crane represents

large, generous, sweeping, round movements – or Large frame movements. The Snake and Crane together represent a Yin-Yang pair with two opposites that balance and complement each other.

There are so many versions of this story but the premise of the story remains the same- how the snake and crane fight. Here is one such story:

The inspiration for Tai Chi came when Chang San – Feng apparently had a dream where he saw a fight between a crane and a snake. He observed the graceful movements of the crane as it flapped its wings, deflecting the snake's strike while the snake was so supple it slithered out of harm's way as the crane attacked with its beak. The fight describes the principles of T'ai Chi- yielding and striking. Soft giving way to hard.

Some people believe that Chang San- Feng himself is not real but others believe he was a Taoist Monk. Another version of the story is that Chang San- Feng who lived in the 13th century was traveling in the mountainous regions of China and during one of his journeys, he observed the fight between the snake and the crane. Either way, it is a great story and one that helps guide our Tai Chi movements and postures.



Chang San Feng



Peace, Linda