



## Silk Reeling and the Tai Chi Symbol

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So far, we have learned about the body mechanics of Tai Chi movement. We have also gained an understanding of how to form the *Dantien's* central status through standing and correct postural alignment, and we have seen how this enables *chi* to flow through the whole body. Next, we will look at Silk Reeling (*Chan Si*), the most basic movement exercise in Tai Chi Chuan.

Single-hand Silk Reeling can be split into four sections. We will examine each of the four sections in the context of right-handed Silk Reeling.

### Section 1

At the beginning of section 1, the right palm faces outwards, the right thumb leads the internal power in the movement; *chi* moves to fingers and weight is on the right leg. This is maximum Yang in the Tai Chi symbol, like turning on a power switch. This Tai Chi symbol is as big as the human body. For a larger person it grows larger, for a smaller person it shrinks to fit the smaller body. The whole body is within a Tai Chi ball; all the movements should be contained within the ball. Hand and foot movements should not go beyond the boundary of the ball. Since we are already at the point of extreme Yang, if we move any further we will have gone too far and will lose balance, affecting *chi* flow. Yin emerges from the extreme of Yang and in a similar way our movement needs to change. Section 1 of Silk Reeling is the process by which Yin emerges from maximum Yang. The right hand moves back and right, then changes to move towards the left and the front. *Chi* moves away from the hand, through the elbow and the shoulder to the waist.

### Section 2

Section 2 is the continuation of section 1. The body moves left, the little finger leads the internal energy movement, the hand follows the body to go left, *chi* flows from right of the waist to the Dantien. At the end of section 2, the hand has moved towards the Dantien and the weight is on the left. The whole body is balanced. This is extreme Yin. If we move any further, we will violate the body mechanics and lose balance. At the extreme of Yin, Yang starts to emerge. Again, we need to change - into section 3.

### Section 3

Section 3 is the change from maximum Yin to Yang. The right thumb leads the internal energy, the right hand rises up to shoulder level, *chi* moves from the *Dantien* through the *Ming men* then moves up along the spine to shoulder height.

### Section 4

Section 4 continues the movement of section 3. The body moves right, the right thumb leads the internal energy, the right hand moves outwards, the *chi* flows from the shoulder, elbow and on to the right hand. Once *chi* reaches the hand, we are back to extreme Yang; the beginning of section 1. Yin emerges from Yang and the next cycle starts.

Sections 1 & 2 are the process of Yin emerging from extreme Yang. In section 1 *chi* moves from the hand through the elbow and the shoulder to the waist.

In section 2 the body starts to move, *chi* flows to the *Dantien*.

Sections 3 & 4 are the process of Yang emerging from extreme Yin. In section 3, *chi* moves from the *Dantien*, through the *Ming men*, up along the spine to shoulder height.

In section 4, the body moves, *chi* flows from the back, through the shoulder and the elbow to the hand.

In the first two sections, *chi* flows from the hand to the *Dantien*. In the last two sections, *chi* flows from the *Dantien* to the hand.

Leg movements are correlated with the hand movements. The two big toes correspond to the thumbs, and the two little toes correspond to the little fingers. When the right thumb leads the internal *chi* flow, it is like turning on a power switch. At this point, the force is on the right big toe. When the right little finger leads the *chi* flow, it is like turning off the power switch. At this point the force is on the right little toe. Generally, if the movement of the upper body is correct, the lower body just follows naturally. Just like steering a car, the rear wheels just follow the front wheels naturally. You don't have to worry about whether the rear wheels turned or not. When the upper body movement is correct, *chi* moves naturally and brings the lower body along with it.

### *The most important thing about practising Silk Reeling*

The most important thing about practising Silk Reeling is to always pay attention to reducing deviation. The body has to follow the *Dantien's* central command and move as a whole. If there is too much movement, it's called "over". If the movement is not enough, it's called "lost". These are all deviations. Deviations also include instances where the body part that shouldn't move, moved; or the part that should move didn't. Through body adjustment, we can reduce the deviation and improve the accuracy of the movement, thereby increasing *chi* flow.

The goal of our daily practice is to reduce deviation and thereby to improve our technique day by day. If our goal is not set clearly, and we are always practising with wrong postures, then we are wasting our time and we will not improve.