



# LIVE WELL LIVE LONG

Teachings from the Chinese  
nourishment of life tradition

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The crane is a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture. It is believed to live an unusually long life, its white feathers mirror old age, and it is the bird that carries 'immortal' Daoist masters to Heaven.

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## PREFACE

Somewhere around the age of sixteen, I became fascinated with the 'mysterious East'. My brother and I used to visit Watkins bookshop off Charing Cross Road in London to pore over books on Buddhism and Taoism.<sup>1</sup> We read both sober and fantastical tales of adventures in remote Tibet, and dabbled in meditation and yoga without really knowing what we were doing. None of this was surprising. It was the mid 1960s and the burgeoning hippie culture was following a long-standing European tradition of mining Asian traditions for alternative life visions.

Perhaps more surprisingly, for me this fascination continued unabated - right through to the present day - and has informed my work and my understanding of the world. For a while I was deeply immersed in Buddhism. I became enthused by macrobiotics - a way of eating based on a Japanese version of yinyang theory. In the 1970s that enthusiasm was powerful enough to lead me to co-write a cookbook and to co-found a natural foods shop, bakery and distribution warehouse, as well as an educational health charity that to this day offers classes in yoga, tai chi, qigong, dance, Pilates and much more.<sup>2 3 4</sup>

When I tired of the food business, it seemed a natural progression to study Chinese medicine in order to explore more deeply some of the ideas that macrobiotics had exposed me to. I qualified as an acupuncturist in 1978, and as a herbal medicine practitioner some years later. I visited China twice to study and practise, and treated patients for nearly 30 years. As an expression of my fascination with Chinese medicine, I also founded a journal and co-wrote an acupuncture textbook.<sup>5 6</sup>

In the early 1990s I began to practise qigong (Chinese body-mind exercise) and have continued to do so, and more recently to teach it.

While these activities were going on, I underwent a concentrated spell of psychotherapy, built a yurt out of locally coppiced wood and spent time in nature with it, played violin in a klezmer band, and studied creative writing.<sup>7 8</sup> Most recently I co-founded a small, ethical, artisan tea business.<sup>9</sup>

I recount these various events to reveal, and almost to surprise myself by discovering, a clear path that has run through my life. As is the case for many of us, it seems to have been the result of a host of minor decisions rather than a mapped out life plan. That path has of course been health and well-being and the many different ways in which we can enjoy and foster it by our own actions.

In my own case, beyond the compulsion to keep learning about the wonderful traditions I have been lucky enough to encounter, and to pass their benefits on to the patients I treated, there has been the necessity to address my own health. As a child I was never especially robust. Then a life-changing period of thrilling but reckless living in my late teens and early twenties, and many years of compulsive smoking, did me no favours. As a result I have been forced to take care of myself in order to manage my life. While I have sometimes been envious of those who are more innately healthy, I do also understand that life challenges are great - maybe irreplaceable - educators.

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This book, therefore, is a weaving together of the different threads of my life. It melds together my work and studies, my experience of being human (family, friendships, marriage, fatherhood, grandfatherhood), the pleasure I get from research and writing, my love of tea, nature, music and dancing, and my socialist family background which imbued me with principles of social, political and economic justice. I sincerely hope that it will be of some benefit to others.

*Peter Deadman, 2016*

## ***Acknowledgements***

I am not a Sinologist, nor do I read Chinese. I am therefore indebted to all the wonderful scholars who have translated the ancient and classical texts used as resources for this book. It would have been inconceivable to write it without them. If there are faults with my interpretation of their work, that fault is entirely mine.

I am also indebted to the countless researchers whose work has been used in this book. Having watched colleagues struggle with the minefield of research projects, I am aware of the hard work and frustration involved.

In addition to the authors referenced at the end of each chapter, I am also indebted to a number of people – academics, Chinese medicine practitioners, friends and colleagues, who have generously given me advice and feedback.

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Heartfelt thanks also to the wonderful British Library and to the sometimes unfairly maligned Wikipedia.



*The sages did not treat those who were already ill but treated those who were not yet ill. They did not try to put in order what was already in disorder but tried to prevent disorder from arising in the first place. Treating disease after it has arisen is like starting to dig a well when one is already thirsty, or only starting to cast weapons once the battle has begun. Would these also not be too late?*

The Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic of Medicine from 2nd century BCE