



Jia家

By Cindy Banker, AOBTA® COSP Director and Chair of the Peer Review Committee

It is such a relief to be finally sitting by an open window and getting some warm, fresh air. It has taken until May for spring to arrive in New England and we are all still recovering from the brutal extremes of last winter. It is supposed to be a particularly good spring now, but by that we mean that the pollen count will be especially high. It feels like spring may have snuck by us somehow because we are suddenly on the brink of summer.

In time for my contributing board report, I would like to write about some of the new ideas which we had conceived and made some efforts to try out over the winter. One such effort was to re-examine the use of the word “Forms” to describe our various kinds of ABT. This originally came up in our in-person board meeting last fall and I immediately volunteered to look into it further. As the person who had been chairing our Forms Committee before coming back into a more active board position, I have had plenty of experience with people asking what the word “Forms” means. As someone who enjoys translating original source text material in Chinese Medicine, there isn’t anything I enjoy much more than pondering and discussing the merits of a particular word and whether we are being true to some original meaning.

As I explained in the board meeting, my opinion was and remains that I think the word we would really like to use for our AOBTA “Forms” should be a translation of the Chinese term “*Jia*.” *Jia* was a common term in ancient China, which is my specific area of interest. I am not sure how that term has evolved or may be used in modern day China. I explained that in classical texts the term is used to refer to what we call Forms. I wrote a brief article with rationale and references and sent it by email to a fairly extensive list of CIs who either actively participate in our current Peer Review process or who have been actively engaged with me in some context relative to the Forms Committee, inviting debate on the issue. I’ve included my original article with some comments from others.

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Introductory Readings in Classical Chinese Medicine is one of the most basic primers for people who want to study Classical Chinese Medical literature. In this book Paul Unschuld simply defines *Jia* as either:

1. a specialist or
2. a house; a family

Mathew's, the more comprehensive Chinese dictionary, elaborates that there are two primary uses. One meaning is "family" and includes not only a household and dwelling but also *jia xue*: 家學 a family school where only relatives are taught.

The second use of this word is as a suffix to indicate the agent. It indicates a specialist in any branch; a class or a school. Equivalent to: ..." -ist," or "-ian," etc. For example, a physiologist is a: "life principle student *jia*": 生理學家。

So this term can mean a group, a family, a lineage and many uses of the English word "school." It was specifically used to describe people who specialized in something, which we would refer to as their "profession."

Originally I thought (perhaps I should say assumed) that the best translation for the word *Jia* was "lineage." This is the word that we kicked around in our board meeting and many of us really liked it. We use this term a lot in terms of referencing the origins and evolution of our Forms. After I actually looked up the word in the dictionary however, I think that the term falls short.

Webster's Dictionary:

Lineage:

- a. a descent in a line from a common progenitor
- b. a derivation
- c. a group of individuals tracing descent from a common ancestor, esp.: such as a group of persons whose common ancestor is regarded as its founder.

Webster's definitions for the word "school" include:

- a. persons who hold a common doctrine or follow the same teacher
- b. a group of artists under a common influence
- c. persons of similar opinions or behavior
- d. a large number of fish or aquatic animals swimming together
- d. *verb*: to teach or drill in a specific knowledge or skill

Thinking about this, I stated that "family/school" or "home school" would certainly both be terrible choices for our English translation for Forms. And this brought me to the conclusion that just like *Qi*, *jia* may not be a word that has a one-to-one translation from Chinese into English. Instead it requires at least several words of explanation. I sent my challenging email out to everyone and was so amazed to almost immediately get a very thorough and well researched response from my good friend **Iona Marsaa Teegarden**. Actually I shouldn't have been so surprised. Over the years, discussing specific terms from ancient China is one of our favorite things to talk about with one another - or I should say write about through email. In any case, Iona made many great points and a very compelling argument for the word "modality." (See Iona's email following). It was really interesting that a few CIs on the email list really hated the idea of using the word modality and quickly jumped in to explain the reasons why.

After several additional suggestions for a good word to use and many rounds of fascinating discussion, **Michael DeAgro** summed up where we had gotten to quite succinctly:

"I appreciate all of the feedback offered so far. I think an ethno linguist would have fun with our discussion. What we will keep running into is, no matter what term we choose, the associations to that term will vary depending on our backgrounds. In my communications with students, clients, and other professionals, I use the terms "form" and "style" interchangeably. In my involvements with the martial arts community I see frequent use of both terms and in my counseling profession I see mostly the use of the term "style." I would be comfortable with either one of them. What would matter most to me in the context of AOBTA is the use of a term that is easily accessible in meaning to the general American public."

In conclusion, I think we definitely eliminated the words "lineage" or "modality," but never came up with a really great new alternative. Several people, especially **Dennis Willmont**, did like the term "style," but it was challenged just as vehemently by a few other voices. These included **Pam Ferguson**, who also made a pretty strong case for sticking with the word "Forms." I finally suggested that, in fact, this might be the best resolution. In theory, much of our Chinese Medical literature revolves around the intentions which Wiseman and Ellis have long championed as "technical vocabulary." They have argued that it is a good idea to choose English words which do exist and can be found in a dictionary, but which will also seem unfamiliar enough that, in their current context of Chinese Medicine, we can actually create a very specific definition of our own. I believe that is what we have inadvertently done over the years by using the word "Forms" to describe the official kinds of ABT to which we give titles. On face value, no one knows what we mean and often we are resigned to give a detailed explanation.

Robbee Fian really loved this idea. There weren't many other people who were still responding to all the emails by that time, few had the stamina to keep on reading every one. ***You can contribute to this discussion in the "member forum" in the Members section of the AOBTA® website***

Addendum:

From Iona Marsaa Teegarden, M.A., LM.F.T., Director of the Jin Shin Do® Foundation for Bodymind Acupressure®

Two of the meanings that you give for "lineage" sound appropriate:

"a descent in a line from a common progenitor," and

"a group of individuals tracing descent from a common ancestor esp.: such a group of persons whose common ancestor is regarded as its founder."

However, I don't think it works to use the word "lineage" instead of "form" or "modality." For example, ABT lineages include Shiatsu, Jin Shin Do®, Acupressure, Tuina, etc."

It seems to me that although each modality or form has a lineage, the modality or form is not itself a lineage.

Also, to use the word "lineage" instead of "form" in Article 18 [of the AOBTA® Rules, Guidelines and Procedures – reproduced below] would be awkward:

1. The lineage must have its foundation in Chinese Medicine.

2. The lineage must have a program of instruction that meets professional level membership requirements of the AOBTA Curriculum.

A modern modality or school might have an approved program of instruction. However, the *lineage* of a form or modality goes back several decades, if not centuries, and therefore predates modern linear programs of instruction.

Only a few generations ago, students felt privileged if a master deigned to teach them, and they tended to study with that master as long as they could, in order to learn as much as possible. There was little or nothing in the way of class manuals. Students were expected to take notes, and to memorize what the teacher said.

Now, students expect defined courses of study with precise objectives and content. That has its advantages, but the unfortunate corollary is that students increasingly tend to think it's the teacher's job to educate them -- whereas it is the students who must educate themselves by taking notes, practicing, and in general utilizing what the teacher teaches.

I have never understood why someone didn't like the word "modalities"! I have disliked the word "Forms," because when I've use that word in communicating with non-AOBTA people, I've had to translate it as "modalities," which was the word that we founders used 25 years ago.

One meaning of "modality" is close to the definition of "Jia" as "school."

From the 1982 *Webster's New World Dictionary*:

- a special attribute, emphasis, etc. that marks certain individuals, things, groups, etc.

Another meaning of "modality" in my 2005 *Webster's Encarta College Dictionary* is:

- TREATMENT something used in the treatment of a disorder.

That is similar to this meaning in the 1982 *Webster's New World Dictionary*

- the employment of, or the method of employment of, a therapeutic agent.

The meanings of "modality" in my 1967 *Webster's 7th New College Dictionary* are quite interesting:

- a therapeutic agency; *esp.*: one used in physical therapy[!!!]
- the modal quality or attribute: form.

So, one has to look up "modal." One meaning (1967) is "containing provisions as to the mode of procedure or the manner of taking effect."

The word "school" is a possibility, since you say the meanings of Jia include "school."

Webster's definitions of "school" include:

- persons who hold a common doctrine or follow the same teacher." That could apply to people learning and following the same ABT lineage.

Asian teachers commonly use the word "school" to refer to a form or modality of ABT, martial arts or Qigong.

An idea might be to use the Chinese word "Jia" and define it. For example:
"ABT *Jia* (schools or modalities) include Acupressure, AMMA Therapy®, Chi Nei Tsang, Jin Shin Do®, six forms of Shiatsu, Thai Massage (Nuad Bo Rarn) and Tuina."

But "Jia" is unlikely to become a household word.

You could use the word "styles," the 2005 definition of which includes:
"A distinctive and identifiable form in an artistic medium such as music, architecture or literature," and "way of doing something."

BUT another meaning is of "styles" is "self-confident willingness to exhibit skill or good taste," and a common corollary is the modern obsession with being "in style."

I prefer "modalities" or "schools."

Cindy Banker, MA, Dipl. ABT (NCCAOM) began her professional practice of Asian Bodywork Therapy in 1982. Since then, in addition to maintaining a busy private practice she has continued her own education in a number of areas which have helped to broaden and enlighten the work she does with individual clients. Throughout this time she has also remained extremely active in the professional development of her field serving as a founder of AOBTA® and in a variety of positions on the national board.



AOBTA® Criteria for Forms of Asian Bodywork Therapy

Article 18 of the AOBTA Rules, Guidelines, and Procedures

To qualify as an AOBTA® Recognized ABT Form, the following criteria must be met:

The Form must have its foundation in Chinese Medicine

The Form must have a program of instruction that meets professional level membership requirements of the AOBTA Curriculum.

The Form must have clearly defined theories and techniques of treatment that, although founded in Chinese Medicine Theory, are unique and which distinguish it from other Forms.

The Form must have origin of lineage or textual, canonical knowledge.

The Form must have at least 20 graduates, which include practitioners and instructors of said Form, who are professional level AOBTA members.

The Form must have a written definition.