



XIN QI SHEN DOJO

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推手

TUISHOU A GOOD PARTNER: A GREAT GIFT

(with the increased interest in Tuishou I've thought this past article would be appropriate)

The layers and dynamics of tuishou or any partner work goes far beyond the mere instruction and patterns we are trying to study, refine and learn. Partner work brings many things to the surface that we normally seek to ignore or avoid. We have our own little quirks, our own baggage from the day, family etc. We have our own frustrations on not getting it, or having had it last week and not this week, wanting it NOW, etc.

One of the most wonderful gifts in partner work is having a partner who works 'with you'. "Well, isn't that the way it should be?" Ideally yes, but it seldom happens in real life and learning situations.

- ▶ There are the partners who are so busy showing you what they can do, or how good they are, that you might as well not be there (except they need you as an audience or dummy to practice on).
- ▶ There are the partners who are continually showing you the possibilities and options. The problem is all you need and want to understand is how to do the damn exercise.
- ▶ There are the partners that would rather socialize

*There is a beginning.
There is no beginning of that beginning.
There is no beginning of that no beginning of beginning.
There is something.
There is nothing.
There is something before the beginning of something and nothing, and something before that. Suddenly there is something and nothing.
But between something and nothing, I still don't really know which is something and which is nothing. Now, I've just said something, but I don't really know whether I've said anything or not.*

Chuang Tse

and visit instead of practicing mindfully or working on 'listening' skills.

▶ There are the partners who just aren't there! They give you no energy or movements to really work with. They hook onto a basic pattern and then zone out.

▶ There are the partners who are so afraid of showing you the 'wrong' way that they continually apologize instead of practicing and seeing what happens. As long as there is an attempt there are no mistakes in my view.

▶ There are the partners who correct every movement you do to the point that you don't get to practice the exercise. In fact, most of the time you're so over-loaded with information that you may forget the pattern of the movement.

- ▶ Then there are the partners who 'listen' to what you are trying to understand and the two of you work at it. Instead of showing you, they are working *with* you. Instead of teaching you, they are *helping* you or sharing.

It's all so complex. There are times we need to be shown how, times we must be permitted to fumble, times to put things together, times to study detail, times to let go.

Now, if we could just get the right timing.

Andy

Dynamics and etiquette of partner work

Though partner practice is suppose to give us a great awareness and sensitivity in order to improve applications and our understanding of our forms, I've noticed there tends to be a BIG blind spot. This is more so in Taiji and Bagua and *not* Aikido. Since Aikido is partner-work based from the start, there is an openness and eagerness after a technique is shown, to grab a partner and begin practice. This is true regardless of the group, i.e. beginners, advanced, slow, or exceptional classmates. Once a technique is shown in an Aikido class the students scurry quickly to grab someone to practice with. Each class will have its 'difficult' and not so pleasant practice partner but it's looks upon as part of training and practice. There is also the understanding that next technique you'll have another partner so you can 'suffer' this one for now.

Now, Bagua partner work is closer to the Aikido attitude than Taiji so I'll be focusing on you Taiji people. First, there tends to be greed—not sharing partners. Members will grab favorites to practice with and then cling to and stick to them even when the techniques change. Even to the point of ignoring other members standing within reach, ready to practice. Bagua members then to do this too, whereas Aikido students immediately look for someone new. Second, once a lesson or technique is shown, members tend to wait, stand around as if waiting to be asked to dance! Or chit-chat instead of using the valuable time to get to the practice. The reason Aikido people scurry is that practice time is limited and important. Standing around wastes valuable training time. In Taiji classes you'll get a few who grab their favorite practice partner and practice. This is usually so no own else grabs their favorite practice person. Others tend to stand, look around to see what the options are,



perhaps avoiding eye contact with someone who may be within grasp and available to practice.

Third, if you've been to an Aikido class or watched one, the energy is quite different from the start. As people arrive they immediately start warming up or grab a partner to practice with, even before class starts, they'll also do this during the break. You'll rarely see the group standing around waiting for class to start, chatting or sitting. Between classes, when there is a break, you'll see members still working out instead of taking a break. Before a Taiji class begins there is usually a social hour, and during break when time could be used for partner work, it's sitting time.

Lastly, in an Aikido class you usually get immediate feed back from your partner. "Try it slower", "That was a bit rough", "Next time try this." In Taiji there is a tendency to chit-chat but not give useful information to help each other. Be careful with this however. Whenever you tell your partner how to improve, be aware of your own technique. Are you projecting?

Things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Practice time is valuable. Unless you have a practice space at home and work out every day, class time and dojo space is limited, so use it efficiently.
- ▶ Partner work requires partners! You can always practice solo forms at home on your own. Make the most of those around you, use them.
- ▶ Our skill will only increase in proportion to the range of people we work with. Difficult people to work with should cause us to try to relax more, loose the ego, expand our knowledge of body types, and definitely show us our weak points. Usually when I hear someone say, "so and so is too hard," it's a reflection of the person saying it not being able to soften, slow down and adapt to the other person.
- ▶ There are beginners and advanced members. You were a beginner once, who helped you? Were you ignored by the other members? Working with a beginner will teach you more about the basic mechanics than with an advanced member.
- ▶ Keep chat to a minimum, try to coach by example, don't lecture your partner. It's hard to listen and do at the same time.

Andy



Why Do We Practice?

anything can happen.

The point isn't to try to second guess what's happening or could happen. Not to be afraid, but just aware and alert. What neighborhood are you in? Is it late? Is the street busy? Is something

out of the usual?

1 a.m. Mother's Day, 1989:

After a night of dancing I was about to give a friend a lift home. As we went to the parking lot there was a call from across the street: "Hey, you have a cigarette?" I woke up two hours later in emergency at Harborview Hospital, my jaw broken in two places and wired shut for 6 weeks. There was someone behind the dumpster we stopped by as we turned to reply. I was hit from behind, knocked down and then kicked in the head, unconscious. My friend was held to watch. It could have been much worse.

The internal arts are meditative, for health, and for martial training. As we practice, sometimes we fall into one area. There are people who just practice for health. Many shy away from the martial aspects. The martial aspects aren't merely doing applications. The martial aspect is to train our minds to be aware and alert. Just like a muscle, if we don't train it, it weakens. Our minds, especially in the internal arts, are our most valuable weapon. Training our awareness and intent is part of our practice if we are practicing correctly. Too often as we practice we focus on what we're feeling, which is important for the energy flow and making sure the basic principles are adhered to. However, another part is training our intent. Focusing our attention in the direction of the movements or where the movement is going. Listening behind!

In my earlier years of training I had instructors who would tell me to always be ready, you're never safe! Never walk close to a doorway, walk in the middle of the sidewalk. Don't walk close to parked cars since someone can be hiding between the cars. When walking around a corner don't walk close to the building, there might be someone hiding around the corner. I thought this kind of paranoid and believed in other teachers, who said "trust in the universe to protect you." I've discovered there is a difference between being paranoid and just being aware. Just like crossing the street, look both ways!

Another area of our practice which is overlooked is being aware of the class situation and others in class. As we are practicing there should be an awareness of the group and the space between us. Sometimes there is a practitioner oblivious to others who plants himself in the middle of the group and has no concern for those around him when he's kicking or stepping backward. This is all training in movement and proper actions. Another aspect of this is . . . how often have you hit the wall or an object in the dojo with a weapon? As Tohei sensei would say, "If so, something is wrong!" Your sense of space, your awareness and control wasn't in use. It's like some people driving and talking on a cell phone. It distracts you and may cause an accident. More importantly, you can't react properly to another's stupid movements. How did you react during the earthquake? Freak out, or look around to see what was the proper action?

What martial artist can stop a bullet? What if we step on a rattlesnake? How many attackers can we handle at one time? Is there such a thing as being invincible? Completely safe? I don't think so. What about waking

up on the wrong side of the bed one day, a day when nothing is going just right? What about when we're sick with the flu or a very bad cold? Can we be prepared for everything?

The experience above has hypersensitized me, to an uncomfortable point at times. No longer do I have the ability to go out and just let go. I notice who is paying attention to what my group is doing, their comments and looks. The only time I can let go completely is at home or at friends'. Anytime out, I know

All in all, what I want to say is, "let's practice to improve our awareness, and strengthen our center, not just the physical movements."

Why do we practice? To improve the quality of our lives on all levels. How often will we be attacked? I know definitely we can't say never, but walking around expecting it hinders the quality of our lives. On the other hand, let's try to live and experience to the max by expanding our senses through practice and training, and hope when it's necessary we act and react accordingly. Whether it's an attack, *Andy*

**Slide
4
Pride**

A performance by local adult amateur skaters to benefit the Northwest Aids Foundation.

April 7, 2001
5:00 - 8:00 pm
Kingsgate Ice Arena
14326 124th Avenue NE
Kirkland, WA 98034

Yang Family, Yang Style

By Sam Masich

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A special thanks to Sam for permitting this article to be reprinted in this newsletter.

Frequently I am asked questions about the curriculum of Yang Style Taijiquan. What does it include? Why do some schools include material that others don't? Why are some practices considered legitimate by some teachers but not by others? In order to understand the variances in curriculum from school to school it is first necessary to understand a few historical factors relating to the creation of this branch of Taijiquan as well as the opinions of the Yang family itself.

In 1990 I had the fortune of riding with master **Yang Zhenduo** from Winchester, Virginia to Washington D.C. in a van filled with Tai Chi players. We were all going to the Smithsonian institute and to see the sights. It was a sunny day and everyone in the vehicle was in very good spirit after an intense, upbeat five-day workshop. The mood was relaxed and, as I was sitting close to Master Yang and his translator, I took the opportunity to ask some questions about his life in China, his impressions of America, his training and his views on Tai Chi. At some point I came to the subject of curriculum and asked him, among other things, what he thought about the 88 movement Yang Style Taijiquan San Shou (Sparring) routine. Master Yang said, "This is Yang Style Taijiquan not Yang Family Taijiquan." He went on further to explain that this was the creation of his father's students and that, while it adhered well to the principles of his father's teachings, it was not to be considered part of the Yang Family Taijiquan.

In Shanghai in 1994, **Madame Wang Jurong** arranged that I might take **Master Fu Zhongwen** for what turned out to be a lengthy lunch in Master Fu's favorite restaurant. I was invited to ask Master Fu any questions I wished and on the topic of the 88 sparring and other questionable routines he concurred with Master Yang. He added that the particular students that created these forms also changed many details in the Taijiquan they had learned from Master Yang Chengfu and that, while their skills were of a very high level, their styles could not be considered truly Yang family but only Yang family in influence.

"The Yang family's Taijiquan", "Yang Family Taijiquan" and "Yang Style Taijiquan"

There is a difference between the historical



Yang LuChan
1799-1872



Yang Jianhou
1839-1817



Yang Shaohou
1862-1930



Yang Chengfu
1883-1936



Yang Sauchung
1910-1985



Yang Banhou
1837-1892



Yang Zhenduo
1926-



Yang Jun
1968-

Taijiquan of the Yang family as a whole and what is commonly currently referred to as **Yang Family Taijiquan**.

The Yang family's history with Taijiquan includes the methods developed by **Yang Lucan** (1799-1872), his **sons Yang Jianhou** and **Yang Banhou** his grandsons **Yang Chengfu** and **Yang Shaohou** as well and his great grandsons **Yang Shouzhong**, **Yang Zhenji**, **Yang Zhenduo** and his great, great, great grandson **Yang Jun**. When taken in aggregate the Yang's family history with Taijiquan includes a vast range of variations and approaches as each of the first three generations made great modifications with the material passed down by their predecessors. In modern times it is impossible to truly understand the full historical art of the Yang's family since there is little record of the practices of the first two generations. The Yang's family tree has produced innumerable branches and stems.

Today, **Yang Family Taijiquan** as it is commonly conceived, is based on the Taijiquan of Yang Chengfu (1883-1936), who popularized the art throughout the 1920's and 30's. The solo routine variation of his approach is characterized by large, continuous rolling movements, steady in pace and rounded in shape. Yang Chengfu's direct descendants, as well as his nephew **Fu Zhongwen** (and Fu's son Fu Shenyuan and grandson James Fu) are the inheritors of Yang Family Taijiquan. Direct students of these individuals, it may be said, are students of Yang Family Taijiquan. This may be also said of any students in the lineage of the aforementioned Yang family members (if there have not been significant alterations or variations of the material and curriculum of these teachers). It should be noted that while there is some variation in style and emphasis within the first layer of Yang family teachers, differences are relatively minor and often based on personal preference.

It may, at first glance, appear that practitioners of Yang Family Taijiquan are limited only to actual members of the Yang family (and their students) because of the direct family relationship. While there may be some truth to this, this is only part of the picture. More importantly, the difference between Yang Family and Yang Style Taijiquan has to do with actual curriculums of training.

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To understanding what constitutes **Yang Style Taijiquan** it is important first to understand that there is no single approach to this subject. Essentially the difference has to do with practices added to the basic curriculum by students of the Yang family. These practices are usually special training exercises or routines designed to augment or supplement the received material, but may even include auxiliary training outside the strict parameters of what normally constitutes Taijiquan practice. Examples of special exercises might include simplified, re-choreographed or tempo altered form variations, preparatory push hands or weapons drills or entirely new routines based on the flavor and characteristics of Yang Family Taijiquan. Auxiliary training could be anything from qigong, stance and strength training to specialized sparring or healing practices.

Some teachers will have supplemented material from their teachers with drills from other instructors. They may formalize these teachings, absorbing them into their curriculum (thus creating new variations of Yang Style), or they may pass these materials down informally, often to avoid disrespecting an earlier master. Still others will use their experience and imagination to develop original material in order to communicate Tai Chi principles more effectively in an attempt to advance the work of former masters. Early Yang Style Taijiquan pioneers include direct students of the Yang family such as **Dong Yingjie, Chen Weiming, Chen Yenlin** and **Zhen Manzheng**, each of whom developed original material and put a distinctive stylistic stamp on the material they received from Yang Chengfu. These teachers added significantly to both the body of material and the international appeal of the art.

Contemplating what defines Yang Style Taijiquan often sheds interesting light on the somewhat purist idea of Yang Family Taijiquan. For example: There is substantial evidence indicating that the creation of the Yang Family Taiji saber and sword routines were undertaken by Fu Zhongwen and Chen Weiming respectively and not passed down from earlier Yang family members. Both weapons forms have been adopted by the Yang family as standard to the Yang Family Taijiquan curriculum. If this is true then a number of questions arise:

- ▶ *Is Yang Family Taijiquan also a collective creation of both Yang family members and students of Yang Chengfu?*
- ▶ *If so, where is the line to be drawn defining that which is authentically Yang Family Taijiquan and that which is Yang Style Taijiquan?*
- ▶ *Can a practitioner be a student of both Yang Family Taijiquan and Yang Style Taijiquan simultaneously under the same instructor?*
- ▶ *Given that these major developments are all*

BOOK BANDON NOW

If you're planning on attending the summer retreat at Bandon be sure to book your room if you want to stay at the sunset motel. It's filling up.

CLUB FEE INCREASE FOR EXTRA SESSIONS

Basic club fee will stay \$60 monthly for one style. Starting March extra sessions fee will increase \$5.00 so if you're paying \$70 monthly it'll be \$75 and \$80 will be \$85. Still a deal.

TUISHOU

2nd, 4th, 5th FRIDAYS
Taiji Mike (Mike Hall) and Anne have opened the dojo for club members to practice. In particular it's so the dojo push hands group can get together for more practice.

PARKING AT DOJO

During daytime classes please be sure to park across the street or around the corner. Two of our neighbors require easy access for customers, hence the limitation on parking in front of the dojo.

CLUB SHIRTS AVAILABLE

Blue & Maroon
T-shirts \$15
Sweat Shirts \$25
Taiji Man shirts soon available
Taiji man T-shirts available soon.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Around May weather permitting the classes will start moving to lower Woodland Park for the summer.

Aikido group:

Jo and Ken waza

Chen Taiji group:

Chen 48 form

Chen Tuishou

Chen sword

Chen Pao Chui fall

Yang Taiji group:

Tuishou & Da Lu

Yang Sword

7&8 next fall

Bagua continuing group:

Xing I-Bagua

Bagua Short Staff

Start looking for a bamboo staff equal to your height.

DOJO CLOSED

August closed

Due to workshops and retreats in the end of July-Sept there will be no official classes in August. However, I do plan on a two week intensive.

The first will be a week long of Roushou, beginning to advanced free hand practice drills.

The second week will be a Aiki jo and Bagua short staff intensive open to all, beginning-advanced.

These sessions will be at Discovery Park.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Francine Seders on her promotion to Aikido 3rd kyu, blue bleit.

WORKSHOP WITH SAM MASICH

March 30 - April 1st

Friday, March 30 - Balancing The Heart Qigong 7-9:30pm

Saturday, March 31 - Form Core Principles 12-6pm
Sunday, April 1 - Push Hands Core Principles 10am-5pm

\$35 for Friday evening only; \$120 for both Sat. & Sun.;
\$75 for either Sat. or Sun.

At:

The Moving Space; 5340 Ballard Ave. NW; Seattle, WA

**For Information call Ken Wright at (206) 632-9357 or
Kim Ivy at (206)789-0993;
www.embracethemoon.com**