

Watering Down The Art

On the one hand, the greatness of the internal arts is that there is something for everyone. As a martial artist the training provides you with very effective skills and techniques if practiced properly. As a health seeker they are a series of non-strenuous, whole body exercises to tone and bring the body back in balance. For someone interested in relaxation and meditation there's a very deep level of focus and discovery that is also possible.

The unfortunate thing is that as time goes on, and with some teaching only a section of the arts, much is lost. Hence, those graduating from such classes tend to only teach what they've learned as *The Art*, whether it's Taiji, Bagua, Qi Gong, or even Aikido. New students don't have any sense of the complete art or have any chance of attaining its higher skills; all they know is what they've been told and taught is the 'entire' art.

One of my main gripes is that few internal arts practitioners know that these arts are based upon a series of classical writings that act as a guidebook for correct practice. Fewer know that there are a series of principles to be followed during practice that keep the form, martial function, Qi flow, and body structure correct, safe, and efficient.

Nowadays those studying are told or instructed to follow form, do form, and that's it! Many don't know why the forms are the way they are or that there are martial functions to the movements. They are trying to copy choreography instead of using the movements to understand themselves, find their center, understand deeper relaxation, or how to move their body efficiently with economy of movement and *natural* power.

Studying with Master Tchoung Ta Tchen was both inspiring, eye opening, and frightening at

times. He taught 'principle based' (what he called old style method); instead of merely doing the form we had to know what it was used for. Many time he'd send us smashing into a wall to demonstrate. We'd have to know how and why doing the posture a certain way was correct and why it wasn't. He'd say, "You understand?" and if we said yes we'd have to show him.

Not only should students know the following statements, but they should be seeking them, studying them as they practice. This is how to develop skill, this is the art.

"The motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, controlled by the waist, and manifested through the hands."

"Insubstantial and substantial should be clearly differentiated"

"You must keep to the 3 bows and 5 curves"

If you don't know these statements how can you correct your practice? How can you be sure you are practicing correctly? How will you develop skill or health if you are merely going through movement to movement without a guideline.

The writings are our trail guide showing us the best and safest route to the top of the mountain. Without it we may be wandering around in the forest, lost for the length of our practice.

For my own understanding and memory, since there are so many principles to follow and levels for each, I put together an Internal Arts Principle Tree. (the horticulturist in me comes out). This tree is an easy way for me to remember how, what, and the priorities in my practice.

All members of Xin Qi Shen Dojo should know these principles even if you don't completely understand them.

Andy

Xin Qi Shen Dojo



Suspend the head-top

Nothing is more pliable than water, yet nothing can resist its power.



Stand like a balance and rotate actively like a wheel.



The waist is like the axle and the qi is like the wheel.

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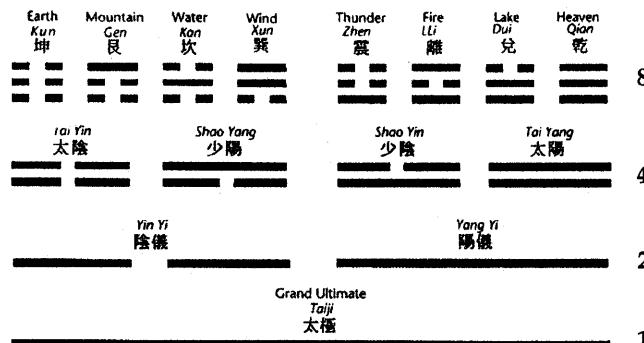
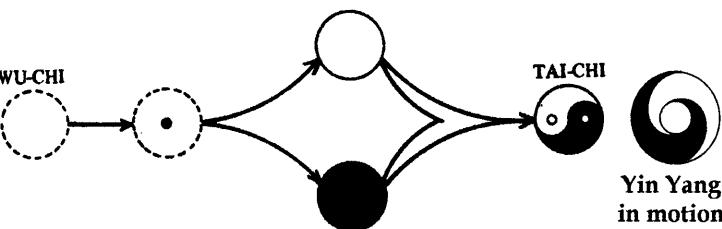
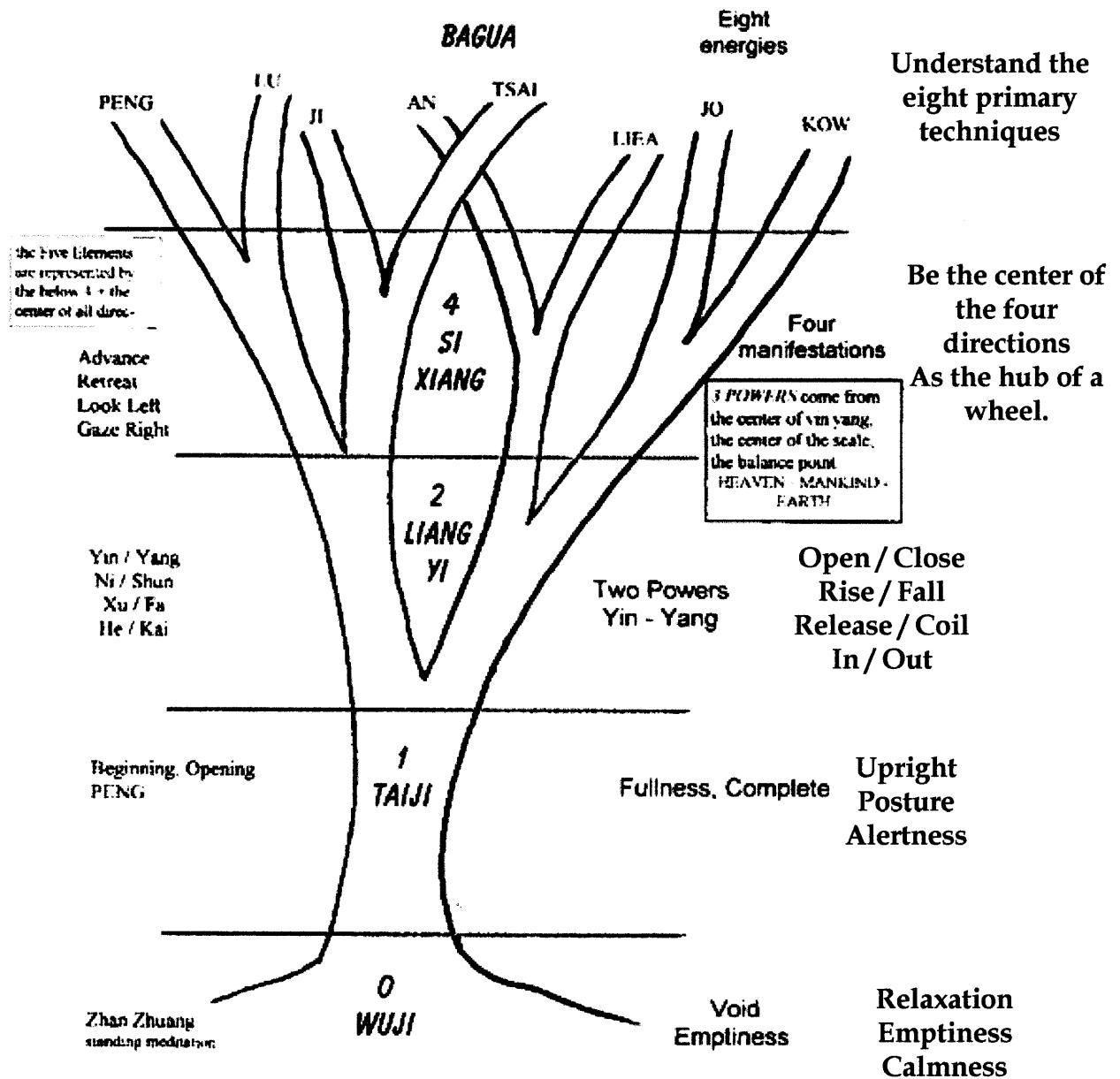
Alert, like a cat about to catch a mouse



Be still as a mountain, Move like a great river.



Internal Arts Tree





WUJI.COM
 2003 Autumn Schedule
 (206) 234-6604
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	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	SATURDAY
MORNINGS			Yang Taiji 9-10 am Bagua Zhang 10-11 am		Chen Taiji Beginning 8:30-9:30 Continuing 9:30-11:30
EVENINGS	Applications Beginning 7:00-8:00 Continuing 8:00-9:00	Yang Taiji Beginning 6:00-7:15 Continuing 7:15-9:00	Qi Gong Beginning 6:30-7:30 Tuishou Continuing 7:30-9:00	Bagua Zhang Beginning 6:00-7:15 Continuing 7:15-9:00	

All instruction, classes, and sessions follow a systematic progression. There is no jumping ahead due to prior experience. To avoid confusion beginners should only sign up for one class. Classes will start the week of September 1st. Students have a large book and video library available. Enrollment will close September 15th. Next beginning sessions will be January 2004

Club Fees:

\$75 monthly / one session/class a week
 \$85 monthly / two sessions a week
 \$95 monthly / three sessions a week
 \$105 monthly / four sessions a week
Club fees are due the first week of the month payable to AT Dale

A String of Pearls (\$10) by Michael Gilman is highly recommended for all students to have as a modern classic and aid to practicing the all the internal arts.

HOW TO MAKE SIFU HAPPY

The Bandon retreat is always a joy, it just gets better each year. This year was no exception. We had a good size group of sincere, friendly, and fun practitioners and teachers.

As I walked along the beach looking at the beauty there was another wonderful site aside from the beach itself. Looking down at the beach I could see various people practicing! Not just practicing but clearly studying their art and researching their forms. These individuals were making the art their own. There was also a participant who would workout tirelessly during the day on his Capeora.

The joy is in seeing someone with a passion for what they've learned, taking the ball and running with it.

As a teacher this shows the core of the art has been passed and that the individuals practicing will one day develop quite a good level of skill.

What more could a teacher ask for?



Internal Arts Festival A Success!

This was the workshop of workshops. Everything came together smoothly and clearly, beyond our expectations.

The purpose of doing this workshop was to remind practitioners and present to new students the holistic aspects of Internal Arts training: Qi Gong, Chan Si Gong, Structure, and Applications. In other words, to be good at applications we need to always adhere to the principles of Qi Gong. And for qi gong to be more effective we need to be alert and mindful as if we're doing applications.

This is representative of the feedback:

Thank you for a very great weekend. the workshop exceeded my expectations and really raised Sharlines interest in doing more. The variety was really great. It gave me a very good look at some things that I had read about but still wondered what was going on. I have nothing but praise for the instructors and in listening to other talk as well as Sharline and I, they really made some points with all that I heard talking. I really think the way they taught was excellent. One point that as an older person, I would like to see 10 ~ 15 minutes between sessions instead of 5 min.



And another perfect time at Bandon. This year many dojo members weren't able to go but we had quite a few new-comers. John Camp, Roger Cloutier, Ken Wright, and Gene Burnett brought several students with them.

It was glorious!

Be there next year:
August 6-8th, 2004.

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This is the Tai Chi Chuan Lun

(modified interpretation
A.T. Dale)

Wuji is "0," our starting place. In the Taiji tree is this the root, the foundation. Before starting our practice we must first relax, let go of all body tension, and empty our mind of all thoughts, desires, or expectations. Our spirit must be calm and clear.

Taiji emerges from wuji. 0 to 1,, from emptiness comes fullness. This is the trunk of the tree. The support.

The energy of Taiji and "1" is Peng, without peng movements can't happen. The body, mind, and spirit are aware, alert, and ready.

From 1 develops 2: Yin/Yang. This fullness still doesn't have movement or motion, but it brings to life the range of possible movements: yin/yang - all the varying shades of gray. Sunrise/sunset this cycle is continuous, otherwise all would come to a stop. As one nears its peak it's the beginning of the next cycle, neither is out of balance with the other in nature, or dominant, this is impossible.

Studying the complementary relationship of yin/yang we can learn efficiency. Not resisting force but surfing it so we may remain safe and understand how best to manage or neutralize it. Being firm and active when necessary and advantageous, creating a flow instead of surfing it.

Respond appropriately to all situations. Don't overreact or underestimate. Stay alert in order to understand the correct and efficient response. Though the techniques and responses seem varied, the main underlying principle remains the same: Stay in harmony with the principles of yin/yang.

The correct touch is listening, listening is also being alert. Through contact we can feel a person's tension, anger, desire, and center. This enables us to understand the correct appropriate action required. Not too much or too little, no wasted energy.

Skill doesn't just happen. It requires years of diligent and mindful practice.

No. 3 on our tree is the pillar between heaven and earth and the three palaces. We stand with our head reaching up to the heavens and our feet on the ground, the center of this is our Tiantien, the hub of our wheel. This pillar must be stable and strong so that strength, energy, and spirit can flow smoothly and freely up and down. The core of this pillar is our center, just like the hub of a wheel. Keeping our

thoughts and energy here enable us to move powerfully in any direction at any time. Our Tiantien is equivalent to the present moment *NOW*. We can learn from the past, plan for the future, but we live and act now.

No. 4. The Four manifestations: advance, retreat, left, right. If we main the pillar between heaven and earth we have the option of moving as we will or need to. Dodging, countering, escaping, or neutralizing are all possible.

The 'right touch' is soft and light. As our practice matures and skill develops we are able to touch lightly so our opponent can't feel what we're up to until it's too late. How can you counter something you can't feel or know is coming?

The internal arts work on being clever and efficient. If you don't meet someone head-on you don't have to be strong. Using physical strength and size requires you to be stronger than your opponent. Using 4 ounces is like opening a door just at the moment someone is trying to break it down. Opening it just at the last moment, all the force generated in breaking down the door is now used against the instigator.

Standing like a wheel, balanced and rotating from a center gives us our No. 5 on the Tree: As we move freely in all four directions we still move from our center as a point of reference. The five Taiji movements: advance, retreat, look right, gaze left, central equilibrium. The central equilibrium is the constant the core, the hub of our wheel.

With the center as our hub we can move like a turnstile. Pressure on one side creates movements of turning or shifting. If your weight is locked into both feet or even one there is no ability to adjust or move correctly or when needed. The weight must be alive and able to shift side to side, yin/yang, easily. When this happens automatically then you have grasped the essence and internalized it.

Don't anticipate, don't calculate, stay alert to the opponent's movements then surf accordingly. Don't try to control them, control yourself, center yourself so you can see clearly.

Practicing incorrectly develops bad habits that become weak links over time. Practice and study mindfully.

This is the Taiji Quan rule.

Tai Chi Lun

by Wang Tsung Yueh

Tai Chi comes from Wuji and is the mother of yin-yang.

In motion it separates; in stillness they fuse.

It is not excessive or deficient; accordingly after it bends, it then straightens.

When the opponent is hard and you are soft, it is called tsou (yielding).

Following the opponent so he becomes backed up, it is called nien (adhere)

If the opponent moves quickly, then quickly respond;

if the movements are slow, then follow slowly.

Although the changes are many, the basic principle is only one.

From familiarity with the correct touch, you'll gradually comprehend jin;

from the comprehension of jin one can reach wisdom.

Without long practice one cannot suddenly understand it.

Effortlessly guide the jin to the headtop, let the chi sink to the tantien.

Don't lean in any direction; suddenly appear, suddenly disappear.

Empty the left wherever a pressure appears, the same with the right.

If the opponent raises up I seem taller; if he sinks down, I seem lower;
advancing, the distance seems longer; retreating, the distance seems short.
A feather cannot be placed, and a fly cannot alight on any part of the body.

The opponent doesn't know me; I alone know him.

To become a peerless boxer results from this.

There are many boxing arts. Although they vary, for the most part they don't go beyond the strong overpowering the weak, and the swift overtaking the slow.

This is the result of the physical ability and not of trained techniques.

From the sentence "A force of four ounces deflecting a thousand pounds"
we know that the technique is not accomplished with outward strength.

The spectacle of an old person defeating a group of youths, how can this be due to swiftness?

Stand like a balance and rotate actively like a wheel.

Sinking to one side is liveliness; being double-weighted is stagnant.

One who has spent years of practice and still cannot neutralize, and is always controlled by his opponent, has not understood the fault of double weighting.

To avoid this mistake you must know yin and yang.

Yin and yang mutually aid and change each other.

Then you can say you understand jin.

After you understand jin, the more practice, the more skill.

Silently treasure up knowledge and study it. Gradually you can do as you like.

Originally it is giving yourself up to follow others.

Don't mistakenly give up the near to seek the far.

It is said, "A mistake of an inch will lead many miles astray."

You must practice and study carefully,

This is the Tai Chi Chuan Lun,