

# Xin Qi Shen Dojo

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## DON'T USE STRENGTH!

If you're working on an internal method it's very common to hear: "Don't use strength."

"No good, too much power."

"Softer, softer."

The classics state use the mind, not the Li. In other texts you'll find: Yi-Qi-Li (intent leads energy, energy leads strength)

In the internal arts it's not that we don't use strength but that we try to use efficient strength resulting from total body coordination. A strength that ripples through the body from the ground to the fingertips. A simple way of putting it, "don't muscle any movements."

Coordinated strength is similar to a boa constrictor, it's pliable, smooth, and powerful. Instead of the strength of an oxen or bull. Think about the difference between a weight lifter and a

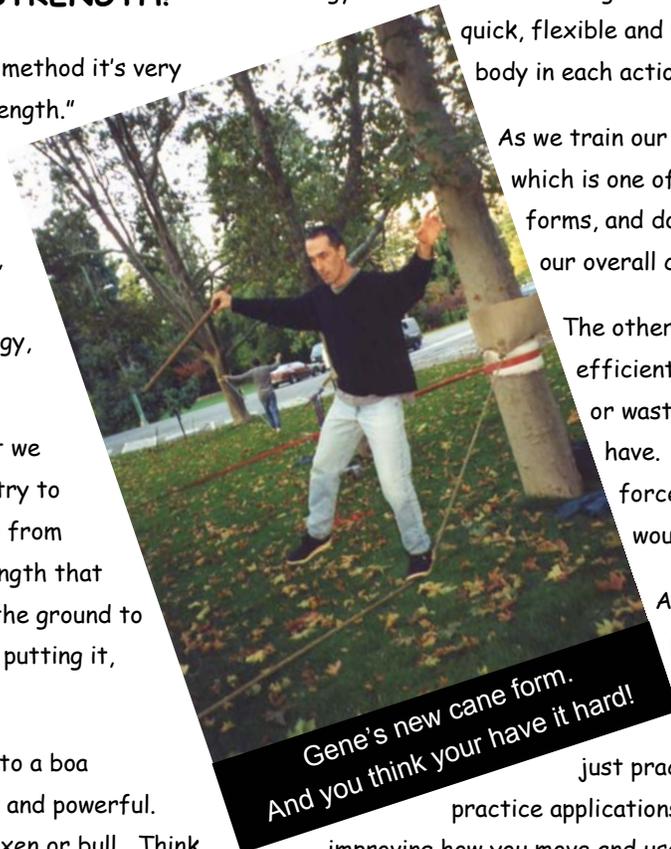
gymnast. Both are strong but the gymnast needs to be quick, flexible and have the use of his entire body in each action.

As we train our bodies in coordination, which is one of the functions of doing forms, and doing them slowly, we increase our overall coordinated strength.

The other part of our training is efficiently so that we don't overdo or waste what power and energy we have. You don't apply the same force in hammering a nail as you would to use a sledge hammer.

As you practice are you practicing relaxation? Smoothness? Centeredness? Or are you

just practicing forms? As you practice applications are you focusing on improving how you move and use energy, or just how to beat your partner?



Gene's new cane form.  
And you think your have it hard!

## WINDS OF CHANGE

Tom and Joel have agreed to teach beginning sessions in Taiji and Bagua as we did last fall. The next new sessions will be the beginning of May. There is a sign-up list for these sessions if you know anyone interested. It is uncertain if we will have a beginning session in September since the dojo has full enrollment and we might not be able to squeeze any more in to the classes.

Once we've moved outside

students who have successfully competed section 1 will have the option of beginning basic solo Dao (broadsword) and partner Dao exercises. More advanced students will begin to learn the Yang Taiji Dao, Chen Taiji Dao, or Bagua Dao.

SPRINGTIME: There will be a slight change in all class sessions. Since there isn't enough time in one night to cover warm-ups, solo forms, push hands, and partner work the sessions will change.

Push hands and partner

forms will be taught on Wednesday nights. A minimum of section one of the Taiji forms or the inner palms of Bagua are required to join. The existing classes will focus on strong basics and form work with application work limited to the forms we're working on.

Since classes move outside during spring and summer we are able to work on weaponry. This year is the Dao: Broadsword. Next year will be the long staff or spear

related to the various arts.

If you study more than one art or take more than one class you need to decide which Broadsword you want to study since learning two forms will be confusing.

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# Traditional & Old Forms

How many of you would give up your cell phones, wireless phones, new computers, new cars, CDs, DVDs, microwaves etc. and go back to the original designs of these components?

As I practice the internal arts, the wisdom in the creation and evolution of the styles amaze me. Particularly when I practice or teach the Yang Taiji partner set. The thought often comes to me, "someone created this, some creative genius." At the same time, as I look at what are called traditional forms, I also think of possible stagnation.

After learning the scales on a piano a student will work on a basic piece of music moving them to a classical piece. As students advance they may put their own uniqueness on playing the classics and perhaps compose or end up playing jazz or something else. This is a natural creative growth and evolution.

In the internal arts what's called the traditional or 'original' forms many times aren't really that old or the original. The 'traditional' Yang long form was standardized by Yang Cheng Fu around the 1920's. There are articles written about his demonstrations when he first came to southern China that his Fa-jing during the form was powerful and some of his kicks were exceptionally fast. Well, now the traditional Yang long form doesn't have fa-jing movements or fast kicks so is it the traditional form? What is a traditional form? Wouldn't Yang Lu Chan's Taiji form be the 'traditional' Yang Taiji Form? Yang Banhou and Yang Chienhou were said to have different methods of practicing the forms. Which was traditional and which was more correct?

The answer I've gotten from Tchoung Ta Tchen, Gao Fu, and Feng were: "If the movements conform to the Taiji classics and principles, and are functional it's correct Taiji." Feng states that Chen Fake modified the Chen Yi Lu 9 times during his apprenticeship with him.

Often I get calls wanting to learn the original Taiji or Bagua, the old style or version. Most often what these individual want is to learn a set pattern of movements that hasn't been changed, modified, improved, or individualized since the beginning of the art. Sorry, it doesn't exist. Different people practicing the same form change it by the body stature, personality, and physical ability of the person teaching it. Tchoung would say that if in ten years he saw us doing the form it should be our form, not his. We shouldn't look like we're copying him doing the form. If so it's not Taiji, it's dead, no principles or Taiji in it.

Now at the same time it doesn't mean going out and just doing movements or creating our own form right off the bat. Like a musician or artist we need basics and structure in order to learn and understand. After that point we do need to grow or it's just painting by numbers.

Use the boat to cross the river, once across don't carry it on your back as you climb the mountain.

The traditional-based forms are like works of art. There is a definite flow and energies of the traditional forms and those based upon them. Something special that can be felt once you've practiced them for years. There's no greater proof of this than comments about the Yang 24 form or Combined Taiji Form by experienced practitioners.

Most of us who have taught for a while, at one point though it would be nice to have a short form to start beginners on or to practice. The Cheng Man-ching form was one I used and it does have the feel of the traditional form. However, it eliminates some movements and is one sided. The 24 form seemed more symmetrical and inclusive so I tried that only to come to the same conclusion as many of my colleagues, "it doesn't feel as good as the long forms." It doesn't have the same connections or energetic flows of the classics. It felt more like a gymnastics exercise than Taiji.

I think it's better to say our current forms are based upon the traditional form. There may be slight modifications of how a hand is held, or how the single whip is done or looks, or how many repetitions of cloud hands are done. But there is a definite energetic flow from these traditional forms that I'd call Taiji.

The question I ask is: "Do you want to learn Taiji or just a form?" "Are you studying with a teacher, or studying to learn a form they know?"



# Wisdom of the Great Round Mirror

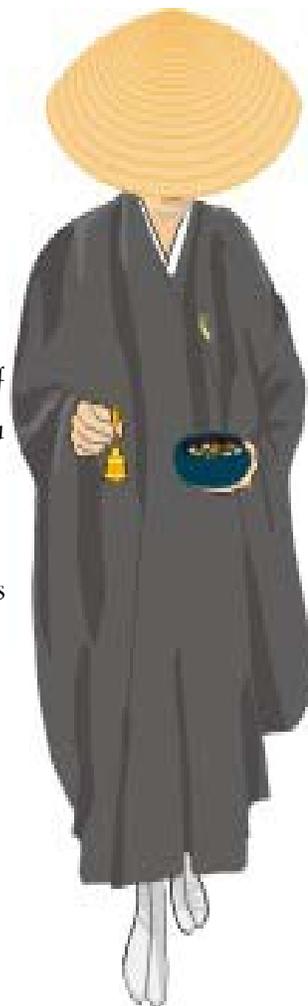
1. A mirror will reflect absolutely any object which comes before its surface, it will not refuse to reflect any object but all are equally accepted.

2. There exists no distinction between good and evil, big and small, beauty and ugliness, sacred and profane for the mirror. The mirror reflects such huge things as mountains and oceans, in the same way it will reflect a tiny insect. This is an equality of acceptance, there exists no value judgment, definition or concept, only the object is reflected.

3. The mirror reflects the mountain as a mountain, and the ocean as an ocean, it accepts things as they are without changing them.

4. The mirror never keeps a reflection after the object is removed. It returns to its peaceful state ready to reflect anything that comes up without sticking to anything.

*Cultivate your mind like a mirror.*



## MIZU NO KOKORO

### *Mind Like Water*

Is the way they say it in Aikijujitsu. Training the mind to be like the great round mirror, clear with no attachments or opinions. Responding properly to the current situation without fear, without thought of reward, without doubt.

As we train in the internal martial arts our goal is to be centered and efficient. This applies to our solo practice as well as our applications.

When you practice form work are you trying to look good? Or are you deep into your study of the movements and their lessons? While doing applications are you trying to manipulate your partner or trying to move from your center and find the efficient method for the technique? While in push hands are you trying to see how often or far you can push your partner or how relaxed and non-fighting you can be in the practice? In the sanshou are you trying to beat your partner to the move or find how your partner's movement creates your move?

### **Xie Xie, Arigato, Danke, Takk**

*Thank you* are perhaps the most beautiful words and feelings in the world. What they are is a response to a generous or kind act, something we're thankful for and that has made us feel very grateful. What more can I say? My surprise 30th teaching anniversary party was just that, a SURPRISE! I didn't have a clue. Last fall I thought it would be nice to have a celebration and invite my teachers and friends, but then as the time got closer I thought . . . "That's too much organizing and work!" I should have figured it out since a few members who occasionally asked when the February celebration would be, stopped asking. Instead I

thought, "Oh good, they're letting it slide by."

Instead you devious people with very high kung fu abilities in stealth (Bob the leader) had everything underway. I didn't have a clue. Even when you thought that I had seen something during classes I was oblivious. A secret: since I can't multi-task, while teaching and in class I rarely can think of anything else.

What this has alerted me to is that I need to practice much more. All this going on in front of me and I hadn't a clue.

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Tung Jin

Understanding Energy

## HOW MANY REPETITIONS?

Master Tung Ying Chieh, in his book, wrote that during each workout we should practice each form at least three times. First to warm-up, second to focus on the exactness of the postures, and third to study the flow.

I was just reading an interview with Master Fu Zhongwen in old T'ai Chi Magazine, 1994, and he said a similar thing. According to Master Fu, Yang Cheng Fu insisted sincere students practice each form 8 to 10 times without a break. Fu said Yang would sit and watch their practice, correct their mistakes but wouldn't let them just break between sets. Practicing any less was good for health but wouldn't develop Kung Fu, jing, or any kind of skills.

With the invention of short forms the likelihood of developing Taiji kung fu is minimal or will take longer since there isn't the intensity of training. Think about it. Walking 10 minutes a day isn't the same as walking for 1 hr. You won't develop the same fitness or endurance in the 10 minutes that is



required to maintain the hour. Harvey Kurland's research equated one hour of constant Taiji practice to walking 3 miles. I remember Bagua Master Pang saying that our Bagua and practice was only as good as our non-broken practice. As we go from one form to the other the inner connection shouldn't break, that's kung fu. Each time it would break, in essence, we were starting over again. Kuo Lienyin said that each day we practiced was a step forward, each day of non-practice was two steps back.

Once you have the skill then you can get by with short forms, but the short forms and short, inconsistent practices don't get you there. This was one of the reasons Master Tchoung's long form is sooooo long. No one practices enough was his comment. He was determined that anyone studying with him, in spite of themselves, would get close to developing kung fu.

This reminds me of a colleague of Master Gao Fu: there is a saying that the instructor can only take you to the door, you had to practice enough on your own. In China we said Gao Fu would drag you in kicking and screaming.

## THE THREE POWERS

The Three powers refer to: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Basically humans are the pillar between heaven and earth. Feet rooted in the earth and headtop reaching to the heavens. Though used in Taiji Quan, the three powers or three palaces are mostly referenced in Bagua, Xing Yi, and some Qi Gong methods.

The power of three really indicates balance. You not only have two ends but there is a middle point, the center. As serious practitioners of the internal arts we are always trying to seek, understand, and conform to Dui La, the mutual extension in opposite directions. A movement forward has a shadow moving back.

The most common reference to the three powers is the three curves or roundings: Arms, legs, and torso. We never stand at complete stiff attention, we tuck the tailbone to round off the lower back. Our arms should always have a bow or curve to them, our legs also have a bow to them, never in a deep angular stance.

As we all know the curve is the strongest structure. Our arms and legs always are like a bow in that they can be

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shock absorbers or issue energy or power out, always ready. Some other bows, roundings or curves are: the palms, the tiger's mouth, the thighs, the arm pits, the middle of the feet. The list can go on.

In Taiji the three bodies: San Ti, are related to ones' advancement in the arts. (personally I don't make distinctions between Taiji progression/advancement and any of the other internal arts).

Each level is also divided into three so we end up with the nine palaces instead of the three palaces or three levels.

Relaxations - softness - power

Softness - energy - strength

Hands - legs - torso

The first level is Relaxation. You will first notice your hands and arms beginning to relax and loosen.

Second, your legs become springier and more stable. You become more comfortable on your own feet.

Third, your waist is able to loosen

and gain flexibility. This last stage I find isn't able to happen until you begin push hands, since it forces the issue of loosening the waist.

Energetically the same process happens. First as you practice you'll notice the energy in your arms and between your hands. Next, you're able to sink into the ground and feel the connection with the ground force and energy. Lastly, as you continue to practice you begin to feel the energy from the tantien. This eventually gives you a sense of being centered and the tantien being the hub of your wheel.

For more information on this there is a chapter in Cheng Man Ching's Thirteen Chapters.

### CLUB CDS AVAILABLE

Window's Media Format

CCD #1 - Chen Taiji 96 Form

CCD #2 - Chen Taiji Weapons

BGCD #1 - Bagua 8 Changes

BGCD #2 - Bagua Weapons

BGCD64 - Bagua 64 Palms

YCD #1 - Yang Long Form

YCD #2 - Partner Taiji Forms

Master Tchoung Ta Tchen collection

Master Yueng collection 1&2

Master Gao Fu collection

Dave collection



**IN THE PARK**

*come and play*

Weather permitting all classes will now be in the park. If you have an evening free come and practice during the ongoing classes. Or, for the summer, schedule an extra evening of practice and watch what the other classes are up to.

*P.S.* Keep a sweat shirt in the car incase it gets too breeze. Also, if you're prone to mosquito bites you might not want to wear shorts.

#### **INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Fa Sung Gong  
 Emei Qi Gong  
 Nei Gong Bang  
 Chan Si Gong  
 Tian Shan Qi Gong

**Yang Taiji - Chen Taiji - Bagua Zhang**  
*complete system*

Roushou  
 Tuishou  
 Sanshou  
 Short Staff  
 Double Swords  
 Partner Sword  
 Partner Saber  
 Partner Cane  
 Partner Staff

Knowing the complete system of Yang Taiji, Chen Taiji, or Bagua Zhang consists of: warm-up drills, specific qi gong, solo forms, fast forms, and weaponry related to the particular art. Certification is issued upon a clear demonstration of strong basics and understanding the core principles of these arts as well as good forms.



This summer all continuing classes will be working on the Dao (saber/broadsword). First we will work on basic drills. Then we will move onto the partner form, a short 10 movement application set. From here each class will move onto the saber form connected with that particular art. If you feel overwhelmed by what you are working on already then don't take on the saber form. Wait until the next time it's offered.

Next summer will be the staff & spear.

#### **Dojo Shop**

Taiji Man Shirts - long sleeve \$15  
 Bagua Crescent Knives \$80  
 Nei Gong Purple Heart Bangs \$40  
 while supply lasts