



# Xin Qi Shen Dojo

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Spring 2009

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2009

## SPRING CLASSES

### Chen Taiji Quan

Saturdays

9-10 am Advanced  
10-11 am Form Work  
11-12 Continuing

### Qi Gong

Tuesdays

6-7pm Bagua  
Qi Gong & beginning  
Bagua

### Yang Taiji Quan

Tuesdays

7-8 Form Work  
8-9 Partner Work

### Taiji Cane

Wednesdays

6-7 all levels

### Dojo Roushou

Wednesdays

7-8 all levels

### Bagua Zhang

Thursdays

6-7:30 continuing  
8-9 advanced

Tuesdays

8-11am Basics

### Advanced

Mondays

6-7:30 Sanshou

Private lessons  
available



## Forms, forms, forms, forms, forms

*At a time when I'm getting rid of various forms and slimming down on what to teach and practice, here's an article on the value of training different forms. On the one hand, forms can be a very commercial way to keep a club in the green. You require students to learn the short-form, then the 39 form, then the 41 form, next the 52, form and so on and so on. Just think how long you can have them stick around and pay while they're only learning the same movements, just put together different ways. Each time you learn a form you're not refining your art since all your focus is on remembering.*

*On the other hand some forms have their place since they specifically teach certain skills that the other forms don't. Unless you're a form collector, a couple of solo forms and one of each weapon should be enough to be well rounded. In this day and age is it really useful to learn the spear or other classical weapons form? YES. Though they require more space to practice and are*

*somewhat inconvenient, there are a lot of lessons learned on many levels.*

### Basic Exercise

*Each weapon gives you more weight to wield as you practice and gently gives you an upper body workout more than solo forms do. Think of them as weightlifting.*

### Complex Movement Coordination

*Each weapon requires a different set of muscles and builds specific mind, body, hand, and foot coordination. Think about the different technique, movement, and strength required to use a hammer compared to a screwdriver or a chisel.*

### Intent and Qi Training

*Here's where the real internal art starts. Think about using a hammer compared to an axe, or even a common screwdriver compared to a Phillips. This is actually where the difficulty of training and practice come in. The sword is used like a fishing pole compared to the axe-like use of the saber.*

**BROADSWORD** - close-in movements wrapping around the body. Movements large and circular which require lots of pulling action. It makes more use of the free hand which is used to help block, parry, and cut. Intent is on one edge and using the side to block and parry.

**SWORD** - formal, extended, precise spiraling movements. It uses more extension like a fishing rod compared to the broadsword. The intent has more work to do since there

are two sides that cut but also a tip that nicks.

**SPEAR** - requires more agility, quickness, upper body strength and focus. Though the entire spear is used, it primarily focuses on the tip.

**STAFF** - unlike the spear, the staff focuses on the entire weapon and full body movement. The short staff rolls in close while the long staff expands the movements outward.

**CANE** - the cane requires much

more upper body work and doesn't need the preciseness of a bladed weapon. Since it doesn't have an edge it requires training in accelerating strength and power for the strikes.

**DOUBLE WEAPONS** - this means two swords, broadswords, etc. This is the ultimate practice since it requires each hand using a weapon at the same time. Not only hand to hand coordination but the mind body awareness are pushed to the max.



## Real vs. Fake

You've most likely heard the joke about someone saying they speak Chinese and when asked they respond with, "Hong Kong, Chow Mein, Chop Suey." The same is true of someone saying they play the piano but only playing chopsticks!

In many aspects it's also true about the internal arts. I remember the comment of someone visiting Master Gao Fu saying, "Wow, there's quite a difference between an expert and a master. What I thought was a master I can see clearly now was merely an expert."

There's playing Taiji/Bagua, there's doing Taiji/Bagua, there's practicing Taiji/Bagua, there's refining Taiji/Bagua, then there's studying Taiji/Bagua.

First of all when you start out you're leaning movement and copying. Until you can do the forms without trying to remember what comes next or have glitches in your form we can't talk any further.

Now a beginner learning the piano learns the scales. Practices over and over again. Is this playing the piano? Next perhaps is refining the transitions between hitting each key, making it smooth. Learning a piece of music it's assumed your fingers know where the keys are so you don't have to think about it. Looking at the music sheet instead of looking at the sheet then down at your fingers to see what key to press. It takes lots of practice to make the playing move smoothly and sound right. Just like our forms! Our forms are not merely a connected series of postures but an effortlessly smooth connection of many individual notes. If when playing a piece of music there are gaps and breaks it's very obvious. Unfortunately with our practice it's not as clear except to your teacher and other masters.

Master Don Angier would say in order to become a real martial artist you had to have the dedication of a concert pianist. There are many way to practice the form and as many levels. Master Tchoung would refer to someone 'playing' Taiji as someone who would mime the movements and have no idea there was anything more to them. There's doing Taiji as someone goes through the choreography of movements believing that's it. Practicing Taiji is a level above the last, it's someone working on perfecting the look of the postures and movements, basically the outer form. Beyond this is someone who is working on refining the flow and connections in the form as related to the classics and principles of the art. Studying Taiji is someone who understands the forms are a way of studying the art and use each posture and form as a self-study as well as a martial and energy study. Listening to the secrets revealed as one practices the movements and hears the inner teachings.

Now there's something here for everyone. Just like someone learning to play the piano doesn't necessarily care about becoming a concert pianist. It's important to be clear, however, what you want and where you want to go. If concert pianist is what you want you'd better get to work. If recreational enjoyment is your interest then have fun! You are the driver of this bus.

## Bagua Qi

### Gong

**Tuesdays  
6-7 pm  
April - June**

This Qi Gong comes from the Cheng Ting Hua / Liu Bin Bagua system. It's a series of 8 basic exercises and movements that expand into the walking and meditative patterns in Bagua Zhang. The last two of the qi gong exercises have been traced back to the Taoist meditative practices of the qi gong method that inspired Bagua Zhang.

The first six exercises deal with storing qi and releasing toxins to strengthen our body and build qi.

The seventh is walking the wuji circle to find center and empty the mind. This Taoist meditative practice was the beginning of the art of Bagua.

The last qi gong is also the beginning of all the Bagua walking patterns. It's Walking the Taiji symbol. The basic movement is simple but evolves into walking the eyes of the yin and yang as well as the wuji in the center of the yin yang.

Aside from a great general qi gong this session is also great as a start to the art of Bagua.



## Eyes: *Sonar & Radar, open or closed?*

This has been a re-occurring question over the last couple of years. Is it OK for me to practice my forms with eyes closed? Or comments like, "I do better in pushing hands when my eyes are closed."

It all depends on what you want out of practice and why you practice. Technically these are martial arts! Not only should your eyes be open, part of our practice is focusing intent, awareness, and directing energy. Your eyes should be on the target or alert to movements and actions. This training isn't only in partner work but also in solo forms, *alertness is important*. Our awareness training has a dui la also. We have sonar, our listening skills of what is happening inside us or our

partner. Finding, and relaxing tension within us. Finding and pressuring the tension in our partner. We also have radar. This is our outward awareness, our eyes, hearing, etc. Keeping alert for movements, attacks and options. Learning not to stare but to be observant of our surroundings as well as aiming our force.

If you're solely interested in meditation and qi gong then it doesn't matter, keeping your eyes closed during practice is just fine but keep in mind, you're not practicing martial arts.

In my opinion you are not training holistically. It's like doing an exercise only right handed, there is an imbalance developing as far as a martial art.

## CHANGES (Many)

As is our tradition, starting May classes will be moving to lower Woodland Park. This summer we'll be there regardless of weather. Classes will be inside the park (see map) to be away from the street and not endure the drive by's: "Karate" and other comments. This makes it harder for us to be found by prospective members but we need to let them know we're inside the park.

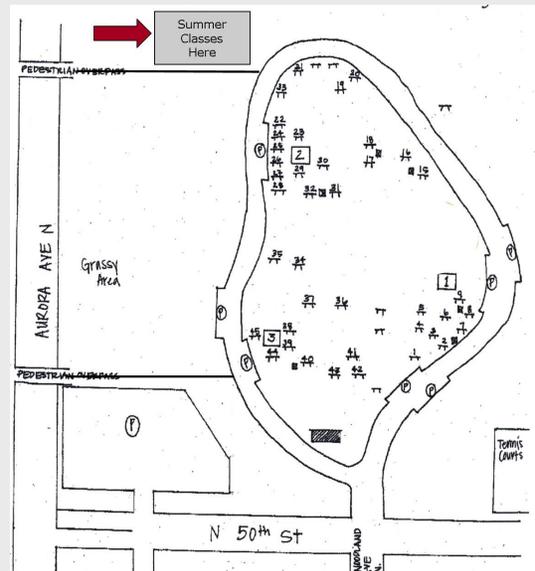
Enrollment is way down, rent and insurance are going up. I've just let the landlords know we can't stay at 8316-8th Ave. It's been great to have our own space where we have our tools/weapons etc. and unlimited time for classes and workshops but it's time for change.

*The dojo schedule will continue to be the same for spring and summer.*

Starting September, when we need to move inside so the classes and schedule may have to change. I'll let you know ASAP.

One major sadness is that without our own place club members won't have as much access to the talent of the advanced club members.

# MOVING OUTSIDE MAY





Jim Harmon is a  
dojo certified  
Bagua instructor  
who relocated to  
Germany last  
year due to work.

*A Bagua  
Hello  
From Jim*

## MAKING THE ART YOUR OWN

Here in Germany, a Wing Chun practitioner recently asked me how far removed I am from the founder of Bagua. That's a tricky question. In the Six Harmonies and Nine Palaces methods, I'm six degrees removed from Tung Hai-chuan, the acknowledged founder of Bagua. In the Wang Shu-chin method I'm only five degrees removed. If you think of Cheng Ting-hua as the "founder" of the Six Harmonies method, I'm also only five degrees away. If you consider Liu Bin the "founder" of the Nine Palaces method, I'm down to four. And, if you look at Wang Shu-chin himself, I'm down to three degrees of separation, which is ironically the same distance from me to Kevin Bacon.

After some thought, though, I'm starting to think it doesn't really matter.

This is not to say that lineage is unimportant, or that the teacher-student relationship is unimportant. Far from it. We should honor and remember those from whom we learned the martial arts. But, I think the greater question is not "from whom did you learn", but rather "what have you learned?" What principles of movement have you absorbed and made your own? This is the true question. I will never move exactly like my teachers. Neither will you. I will never emphasize the exact same things as my teachers do in the exact same proportions. Neither will you. So what is the point? What is being transmitted? What is being learned?

Principles. I will never move exactly like my teachers, but I can move from the same principles. And if I move with good body alignment and balance, and keep my movements connected, isn't that the internal arts? I may not be performing a movement with a cool name like Dragon Dives Into the Sea, but am I not doing internal arts nonetheless? The more I practice, study, and teach, the more I believe that the forms we learn are examples. What they tell us is "this is how movement should feel." We practice so that we learn to move from principle. Then, we can make any movement internal, even sitting or walking. When we begin to move habitually from principle, we begin to make the art our own. And **that** is the whole goal: to make the art your own.

## OBSERVATIONS ON TEACHING

Last October, I started teaching Bagua here in Germany. Many of you teach in Andy's dojo, but most of you do not. I thought I'd take a few minutes to relate a few of my observations from teaching.

I probably learn as much from teaching as the students do. To be a really good teacher, you have to know your subject forward and backward, and in incredible detail. Teaching a Bagua class has forced me to go through my repertoire of techniques and forms and really study them to see what works, how it works, how it feels, and how I can best describe it to someone else. And the students themselves will ask the darnedest questions! They will ask you things that you never even thought about, forcing you to learn on the spot. I could take five years of lessons and not learn as much as I could in one year of teaching.

The average student at Xin Qi Shen dojo knows a lot. When I first contemplated teaching Bagua here, I was struck by doubts. "I don't know much at all," I kept thinking to myself. To put things in perspective, I have trained Bagua continuously for the last 4.5 years, and I have studied martial arts for the last 9.5 years. I'm no master, but I'm also no novice. What was my problem? I kept comparing myself to everyone I've been training with at Xin Qi Shen. Everyone seemed to know more than me. Everyone seemed to have studied for 10, 15, or 20 years. There **are** a lot of people at Xin Qi Shen who have studied for many years (decades?), but for one reason or another will never start a dojo on their own. If you're new, find these people and learn from them. If you are one of these people, I look forward to working with you when I get back to Seattle.

It is hard to keep a class running. I've had a couple of months with no students, and most months I only have one or two. Part of this is due to the relatively unknown nature of Bagua, but it is simply hard to keep a class full. I have posted flyers everywhere I can, I've performed two demonstrations at the base gym, and I've even shot some footage for AFN TV. At the same time, I've had one person claim to be "ready to sign up" for three months now, I've had two promising students move away, and other promising people show interest and then just disappear. I'm not trying to elicit sympathy; I'm just explaining how it is really difficult to get a class going and keep it going.

It's all worth it. This one really doesn't need any explanation.

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## NATURE OF TRAINING

I spend a lot of time working on my strength and conditioning (I know, I know; how very "external" of me!), and I belong to an internet forum devoted to such. One of the questions that comes up time and again is what specific program an athlete used to succeed in his/her sport. What's their secret? What are they doing that the others aren't? Is it just genetics? Are they on drugs?

Unfortunately, the answer is that there is no secret training regimen, it's not just genetics, and, well, yeah they're probably on drugs (as are most athletes in the

professional ranks). The key, though, is that there is no secret shortcut to success. The only real secret is hard work.

It's shocking, and not a little depressing, to realize that the single most important aspect of my martial arts training is how much effort I put into it. It's not which form I'm doing today, it's not which art I'm studying, and it's not how many forms or techniques I can recall from memory. What is important? How much am I practicing on my own and how much effort am I putting into that practice? Am I practicing with correct principles? Am I

really studying the movement instead of simply running through the forms? Do I move with intent, from my center?

The great practitioners are not great because they learned some super-secret, ninja-pirate, spec ops Qi Gong. They are not great because they were born great and just can't help themselves. They are great because they practice. They practice the fundamentals. They push themselves in their own practice. And they do all of this every day. What are you doing today?