

New Arts? (subdivisions/re-classifications)

Having taught the internal arts for many years I've experimented with various ways of teaching Taiji Quan, Bagua Zhang and Aikido. In doing so I've discovered ways of making learning easier and efficient, as well as making many mistakes.

I was taught each as a complete system to be taught as such. Taiji Quan was to be taught qi gong, solo form, push hands, da lu, sanshou, and weaponry. The same can be held true for Bagua Zhang. Though this systematic approach to teaching these arts is an excellent way to teach someone to become proficient at Taiji Quan or Bagua Zhang, it may not be a necessary way to teach those who are only interested in the arts for the sake of health or self defense.

Teaching roushou, tuishou, sanshou, and various weapons it has occurred to me that each of these can be systems unto themselves. Also, some students are interested in only studying one aspect of the art instead of the entire art. This being so, I am now looking at these as separate systems and methods complete in themselves.

The solo forms teach good basics that enhance push hands. Push hands is an art in itself with the full benefit of health and self-defense skills, or just as a fun exercise to teach the art of relaxation and centering.

The roushou drills are also an art complete to themselves considering our club's roushou drills are a blend of Bagua Zhang, Taiji Quan, Yueng Quan, Harris Shoshin ryu, and Aikido. Though an important step in learning the internal arts for health and self-defense these arts can be practiced by themselves, separate from the solo forms. For those interested in partner work there is

no need to learn the solo forms, even though the solo forms are important for basic foundation; learning structure, alignment, relaxation, and execution of strength. It may take longer to achieve a high level of skill without the solo and basic practice, but partner work can still be a separate system.

The Sanshou is a more complex pattern of movements and forms than Tuishou or roushou and requires much more dedication. However, it can still be taught separately from Taiji Quan and practiced as a solo form, as well as the art of applications. Contained within the sanshou are grabs, trips, throw, and strikes similar to any solo form.

Xin Qi Shen Dojo teaches several different styles of Taiji Quan and Bagua Zhang. We also have quite a few different styles and forms of the various weapons. There are those that are interested or find it more fun to work with weaponry than solo forms. I have a few students who have learned the weapons of the various Taiji styles, Bagua, and others that I've learned from my teacher, as well as partner versions of the weapons. I see these individuals as specializing in that particular weapon.

So starting 2010 I've started issuing learning certificates and teaching certification for the different arts of the above. This way, one can achieve teaching certification in Roushou, Tuishou, Sanshou, and a particular weapon. The teaching certification requires that the individual know all the forms and exercises within that category. As with other teaching certifications, there will be certain requirements for demonstrating and assisting in teaching the art.

A.T.Dale Internal Martial Arts

Summer

2011



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Yang Taiji Quan: Monday 4:15 - 5:45 pm Tuesday 7:20 - 9:00 pm Wednesday 9:30 - 11:00 am	Sanshou Intermediate Monday 6:00 - 7:30 pm Sanshou Advanced Saturday 9:00 - 10:15 am
Chen Taiji Quan: Saturday 10:30-noon	Tian Shan Qi Gong: Tuesday 6:00 - 7:15 pm
Bagua Zhang: Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 pm	Roushou: Monday 7:30 - 9:00 pm
Taiji Sanshou Basic: Thursday 7:30-8:45 pm	

Private lessons offered before Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday classes. Booking must be a week ahead.

Approaches to learning #2:

In my 40+ years of learning and teaching, I've noticed several different ways of learning forms and studying the arts. We all have our way of getting things, for me, Sensei Harris helped a lot. Early on, as we went out after a training session, he gave me a series of questions to answer. After completing them, he looked at it, then put the results on a graph. (I still have it somewhere.) It showed I learn mostly (not completely) by getting the idea of the lesson, rather than following the step-by-step instructions. This helped me to "translate" what my various instructors were teaching into my view of things.

Some things that work for solo forms don't work for applications. Even if your partner punches slowly, there is no time to intellectually understand the situation and figure it out. This is where basic drills come in. The route of over and over again train muscle memory, not mind thinking. This is why we should do drills for hours.

Today it was fun watching Debbie moving from one partner drill to another. Though the drills were different (Interlocking drills and Bagua partner form), I saw her naturally respond to a punch from the other form naturally. Though it wasn't the movement for that specific form there was a body wisdom that took over and she surfed the move. :)

I strongly believe that the way to get applications is to do simple moves several billion times. Each movement.

Seek the near, not the far!

One of my frustrations is that when working on partner drills or applications is that some, before having the basic movement perfected or even understood, will try to move on or try to figure out other or counter-movements. There is no understanding that unless the core movement is in muscle memory instead of mind memory, it doesn't matter. There is no skill development or intuitive, muscle memory learning. Sometimes, these individuals go on the defensive when attacked instead on the offensive not trusting what's appropriate for the moment. Too slow! It's like knowing what a car is, not knowing how to drive, yet planning on going on a road trip.

What I'm trying to say is that we need to focus on the simple, basic drills. Understand that in order to develop skill is repetition a million times. I can show you many counters for a technique but you can't really learn them. You need to be at a skill level where you can understand the technique applies so the counters are apparent, not calculated or thought of.

Approaches to learning #1:

It's important for each of us to find our own way of learning. But at the same time we need to stretch and challenge ourselves to expand.

As I observe club members learning forms and applications there are a few noticeable variations. One is: foot goes here, hand does this. Another is: closing their eyes and trying to remember the lesson. Another is: I think it's something like this. Another is: I'll never get this, it's hard. Another is: let me just do this one thing, over and over again :).

For a beginner, too much input is TOO MUCH! We do need to take things slowly and clearly so that we can learn and imprint it into muscle memory. (However, some of you think you're beginners but not! After 5 steady years of study you are not a beginner!)

Some of these techniques may work only when learning solo forms compared to partner applications or vice-versa. In applications it's important to start with the simple drill and do it over and over again. Don't close your eyes, unless that's part of the drill, but be there and deal with the punch. Don't try for the full movement if it's over-whelming, just start simple then move on.

The more we tackle the less we get, or the longer it takes us. We need to let our partners know when we're in over-load. Please, let's just do the first part. OK can we move to the next.

My goal for you is to develop skill, not tricks. I watch, study, and listen. I can see most of the time whether you are getting it, even if you don't, or if you're in your own way.

In applications, thinking doesn't help! One step at a time, each with many repetitions so that you don't have to think, just feel! Muscle memory.

Bandon 2011

July 15,16,17th!

Though Bandon is quite a distance from Seattle, that's what makes it special. Actually, it's distant from most places which is why there aren't many people there :)

It's a vacation! Classes are paid per-session so you do what you want..
The quality of instructors is incredible. Come and enjoy the beach.