

# Xin Qi Shen Dojo

## Happy New Year

WUJI.COM  
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### Skill = Spiritual?

The core of martial arts training was: fighting and self-defense. Perhaps due to TV, movies, and fiction there is this thought that the study of these arts is a spiritual practice. Yes, there is the Shaolin Temple legacy, but I have trouble believing a true Buddhist would practice techniques of fighting, war, and killing. Isn't there something about not taking life? Perhaps just like the Samurai, Zen was adopted to make them better warriors, to discipline their minds, to justify their actions, or be able to live with themselves. Much of the Samurai code of honor was written during 80 years of peace while the warriors were reminiscing about the good old warring days that didn't have the rigid standards they began to impose the code of Bushido: way of the warrior.

It's my view that the study of these arts actually develops a

security in who we are, so we mature and begin to express who we really are. Our true nature is free to emerge when we are centered. Perhaps mindful practice leads us toward a higher level of being. But that isn't the rule!

There is also the fact that many who see the result of violence end up re-thinking their path, mature personally, or as an act of redemption seek a more peaceful life. The founder of Aikido was quite a hell-raiser in his youth, not the image most Aikido people have of him. Chen Fake, Yang Lu Chan, Fu Cheng Sung, or Sun Lu Tang, though leaving stories of high moral virtue, first got their reputations from fighting and winning. How many people were hurt, crippled, or killed by them before they mellowed out or attained a high degree of skill?

I'm sorry to burst the bubble but

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### Skill = Fit?

Though booked as good exercise or good for health, these arts aren't complete in themselves. Though practice does increase muscle, coordination and balance, unless you practice your fast forms for at least 1/2 hour continuously you're not exercising your heart rate.

Regardless of the movements and art, as skill increases and techniques become more efficient, movements end up smaller and more exact. This is true in all fields. Beginners look like they're doing a lot of work, the experienced make it look easy and casual. The higher level of skill, the more efficient we move and the less energy required.

As far as skill and movement, this is a good thing and a bad thing. Yin/Yang. When we learn these arts our

movements are large and sometimes exaggerated so we can learn and feel the process. As we practice and internalize the movements and lessons, the circles become smaller and easier since our coordination and understanding is better. This is a natural process. But so is aging!

Be more relaxed, soften, don't over-work is the basic teaching. However, as our skill increases we don't have to exert as much. We don't have to move as much. As our skill gets better, this isn't necessarily good for our health.

Look at Master Yang Cheng-fu. In the latter part of his life he was very large. Students said he would sit in a

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Skill = Better?

This is our class distinction and prejudice. Just because someone has skill doesn't make them superior. Neither does being from a certain lineage, name, family, or group.

In Skill = Spiritual I touched upon this briefly. We carry this class distinction over to martial arts but wouldn't consider it in other areas. Why? If your lineage descends from Alexander the Great does that make you better? If your father, grandfather, or great-grandfather was the inventor of modern dentistry does that mean, even with training, you have a greater insight than all others?

I was looking at an Aikido DVD of a seminar by the current head of the Aikikai. The founder of Aikido's grandson. As I was watching, though his movements and techniques were very good, in the background were disciples of his grandfather. Instructors who were training and practicing way before he was born! The thought that crept into my mind was: "They should be teaching, he should be studying from them." However, just because of lineage, he is the chief and leader of the official art even though he may not be the most skillful. Some people will value his teaching more than their own teacher's due to his title.

Just like assuming someone is spiritual because they have great skill, there is an assumption that someone with skill, or the right name has a greater understanding or are automatically better at the art. If my father was a great surgeon it doesn't automatically mean I have the same gift. Also, though one is skillful, it doesn't mean they can teach.

Could this be why many martial arts don't have any real masters anymore?

Basically these articles are to encourage you to think and examine your choices and goals. Are your choices and decisions yours or ones you accept blindly? Are you acting out of assumptions, trained responses, fantasies, or clarity?

Skill = Spiritual? (Continued from page 1)



let's be real.

We apply a narrow logic to things. Skill & talent = good & spiritual. At least in the Asian martial arts. Just like the movies and books tell us. Well, use your brain!

As skilled teachers have come to the U.S. over the years, whether it's Yoga, martial arts, or other fields, there automatically is this assumption that they are more spiritually evolved: 'Masters'. It becomes our religion with all the trappings. There is also the thought that they will give us the secrets, empower us. This goes without questioning. When the truth is: *the work is ours*; it can't be given to us! It's like we look at the teachers, and admire how well they fish instead of learning to fish for ourselves.

Wouldn't it be odd if a top basketball player were received that way in Asia? Though these arts have a possible 'spiritual' dimension, they are martial arts or sports. I've seen, and known, high level teachers treated with more than mere respect but reverence. Some were amazingly physically skilled but emotionally manipulative, cruel, or sleazy. I've also met some instructors with not as much physical skill but were unique examples of a good, kind, moral person. Great role models that don't get a fraction of the attention.

I don't understand it. We have this belief that being skilled at these arts will equal spiritual contentment or centering. On the same note there is this thought that if someone has great skill they are automatically better than us. (See *next article*). Sensei/Sifu may be so in class, but in daily life they're like the rest of us. Unless you're doing an apprenticeship, seeing your teacher away from class, you may be polite or respectful but you don't kowtow and act like a servant. So many

give up their power, put their brains on hold and follow unquestioning what is taught and said. To me this is very contrary to our purpose of training.

We don't have to study these arts to defend the village anymore. And if we did, we'd be training differently considering it's a world of guns, not swords. In my opinion, the value of current martial arts are to refine ourselves both physically, mentally, and perhaps spiritually. Having the physical ability and mental alertness to jump out of the way of a car is important. However, our study doesn't mean we're spiritual or more evolved. We're on a path of self-discovery and refinement. Let's hope this leads us to our higher nature.

Intend leads energy! If we're studying for centering and spiritual goals we're already there! Our head light is already pointed in that direction. We just are using these arts to polish our true selves more.

Skill = 'Fit'? (Continued from page 1)

chair and instruct. Once in a while he'd get up and demonstrate, sending students flying into the walls, then go sit back down. Skill doesn't necessarily mean physically fit. Just as skill doesn't necessarily mean high morals or a good person. This is a common misconception. If you look at some of the top masters, the *real* masters, they don't look like much. They don't look like what we'd call an athlete or even powerful. Maybe in their youth they were buff but not as they got older and more skillful. Their skill is hidden inside normal aka regular bodies.

Master Tchoung mentioned that as we get older it's important to practice our form large frame and good stances. Exercising to keeping the body flexible and strong becomes more important as we get older. As we get older our body 'shrink-wraps.' Our range decreases and as it does it's easy to want to stay within that range of comfort. Since our skill supports this idea of no exertion, our physical range decreases.

Two of my challenging and enjoyable practices are the Six Harmonies Bagua Zhang and Aikido. Afterwards I feel loose, fit, and exhausted. The movements force me to keep my range of motion, stretch, strengthen, and be agile. When I've laid off the Six Harmonies Bagua or even the Emei Qi Gong I definitely notice my range of movement has suffered. When I lay off Aikido my wind lessens. I'm sorry, but as we get older we need to move more, make larger movements, and be more active in order to stay fit and healthy. This doesn't necessarily mean train like an athlete. Keep in mind this also applies to our mind! Especially with the raise in Alzheimer's happening at earlier ages.

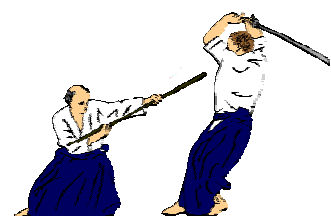
A while ago a tape of the National Aikido Friendship Demonstration was donated to the dojo library. I looked at it in surprise and disgust. Several people I knew from years ago, and a teacher of mine, had gotten very large. My thought was: it's clear they haven't taken a fall or been an uke in ages.

Now on the same note, we need to keep our minds growing. Adaptability and learning. Those who are locked into a form that has to be done just so, or it's not correct, or to win competitions aren't practicing internal arts or growing. Even further, they aren't exercising their minds.

When you first learn the forms, they are done in a particular way. However, once you've learned the forms, they're yours. Play.

- > Large frame - small frame
- > Large stance - high stance
- > Set step - active step
- > Qi gong - applications.

Practice with monkey, snake crane forms. Drunken style. What about miming your teachers? Use it or loose it. Body and mind. Increase, or maintain, your range.



Yueng Quan  
Shoshin Ryu  
Aikijitsu

Harris sensei's club has been in  
continual operation in Seattle  
since the mid 1960s.

# Harris Sensei

## ARTS

Kenpo - Aikido - Aikijitsu - Yueng Quan - Yang Taiji Quan - Bagua Zhang  
Xing Yi Quan - Red Boat Wing Chun - N&S Praying Mantis - Shito Ryu Karate

## TEACHERS

Raymond Chung - Sid Woodcock - Tchoung Ta Tchen  
Koichi Tohei - T.Y. Pang - Madame Gao Fu - Master Zhang Jie

When an Aikidoka watches Dave they think he's doing excellent Aikido. A Wing Chun student assumes he's doing soft style Wing Chun. Similarly a Taiji person assumes Dave's art is Taiji, as a Bagua practitioner thinks it's Bagua.

After over 45 years of intensive study in the martial arts they are all one to Dave. His footwork is Bagua, his balance stealing and throws are Aikijitsu, his trapping hands wing chun & mantis, his postures look Taiji. When he's subtle it looks like Taiji, when direct it's Xing Yi. He has the full range to be soft and light, or direct and penetrating.

His personal style goes by several names. Early on it was Karate Jitsu, then Shoshin Ryu Aikijitsu (beginner's mind techniques of blending), he jokingly refers to his system as: 'Fools Eclectic Improvisational Chinese Hand Dancing.' More correctly called Yueng Quan. Dave is the longest continual student of Master Fook Yueng and perhaps his most brilliant student. Master Yueng refers to him as son.



In the 1960s - 1990s, whenever martial arts masters arrived in Seattle, Dave found the time to study with them. He's been a continual student of Master Fook Yueng since the mid 1960's. During this time Dave would take frequent trips to Richmond, WA to study Aikijitsu with Master Sid Woodcock. In the late 1960's he became a student of Taiji master Raymond Chung (a good friend of Master Yueng's) and learned the entire traditional Yang Cheng Fu system from Master Chung. After Master Chung wasn't able to continue to teach in Seattle, Dave went up to Vancouver B.C. to seek another Taiji teacher to come to Seattle. Dave is responsible for Master Tchoung Ta Tchen teaching in Seattle. Dave was one of 5 students who studied with Master Tchoung, receiving a teaching certification after 6 years of study. In addition to learning Taiji from Master Tchoung, he also learned Bagua and Xing Yi Quan.

When internal arts master T.Y. Pang first began to teach in Seattle, Dave was one of the first to sign up. Dave studied the Yang (Tung Family) Taiji method and Pang's Bagua Zhang for several years. When Aikido master Koichi Tohei was teaching in Seattle, Dave was in each session he could manage. Similarly, when Aikijitsu Soke Don Angier was teaching workshops in Seattle, Dave was there.

In the late 1980s Dave attended as many workshops with Chen Taiji master Gao Fu as his schedule would permit. In the 1990s when Bagua master Zhang Jie arrived in Seattle, again, Dave was one of the first to sign up and took private lessons for several years. There have been many other workshops with visiting teachers, but you get the idea.

As in the tradition of Master Yueng, Dave's pursuit of the arts is to have fun and play, not fighting. Though a highly skilled martial artist, Dave's practice is the study of energy in movement and the dynamics of balance, intent, and momentum. It's not about throwing or hitting someone, it's the interaction of energy, the conversation and possibilities that happens when one person directs force at another.



The common experience ukes (partners) have when working with Dave is that every movement done to respond or counter is the wrong one. Dave surfs the action and lets the uke just trip over themselves. His touch is so light that there is no feeling of being thrown or manipulated. Just as a musician doesn't just sit down and play Jazz, Dave has internalized his training to the point that everything he does is Jazz.

Dave doesn't teach martial arts professionally, it's just for fun. Every now and then he does special seminars at his student's clubs in Seattle, Victoria B.C., and Walla Walla. He is a regular and popular teacher at the Puget Sound Internal Arts Festivals. He has been one of the Northwest's hidden treasures since the late 1960s and continues to be so. Online: [www.wuji.com/Harris\\_Sensei](http://www.wuji.com/Harris_Sensei)

## DOJO DIRECTIONS

### Fast Taiji February

Those who have finished the solo forms of Yang Taiji will be learning the 8 directions 7 stars applications set, our replacement for section 9. The Chen Taiji members will be working on the Er Lu (second set) aka Chen Taiji Pao Chui. Prepare to work!

### Sun Taiji Quan

Jake Burroughs, chief instructor of Three Harmonies Martial Arts, has agreed to teach a class in Sun Style Taiji at the dojo this spring, 2nd Sunday each month, \$30.00.

Jake is also available for private lessons. Check [www.ThreeHarmoniesMartialArts.com](http://www.ThreeHarmoniesMartialArts.com) let me know if you're interested, Andy

### Roushou / Chi Sau

For the month of January, Stephan Illa will be teaching the Monday Roushou class. The focus for this month will be Wing Chun Chi Sau drills .

### Aikido Sessions

Monday night Aikido will be split into two sessions. 6-7 pm will be the Aikido (short staff) and open to **all** members and levels, not only Aikido people. 7-7:30 will be an intermediate Aikido class meaning you must have decent ukemi since we will not be using mats.

### Chen Double Swords

Derryl (Seattle Chen School of Chen Style Taiji) will be doing a class or workshop series on the Chen Taiji Double Broadsword form. Check with Derryl for when, where, time, and how much.

### Classes Change In Procedure

Though we've always focused on the applications of the various forms, all form classes will be 15 minutes to 1/2 hr on partner drills and applications relating to the forms taught.



# Year of the Cane & Walking Stick

Unlike the Chinese calendar, the dojo marks the years by what instrument of instruction will be the focus for that year. Last year was the year of the double-edged sword. The year before that was spear & staff. In 2007 all qualifying members will be learning the partner cane. For those who already know it, you'll have the opportunity to learn either the solo Taiji Cane or Bagua Cane.

### Current January 2007 Dojo Membership Long-timers

From 1980's	5
From 1990's	12
From 2000	14
From 2004 -	21

### Congratulations

to

Belinda Frazier and Shannon Howard for passing their Qi Gong Certifications training. This requires having a good understanding of the different Qi Gong methods taught at the dojo. The test was teaching the class for one month.

And to:

Jim Harmon for passing the basic Bagua Instructor's Certification. This certification indicates he has a strong grasp of the basic drills, Bagua Qi Gong, Inner Palms, Single Palms, and applications of the above. Jim is the dojo's Bagua beginner's instructor on Thursdays.



*Bandon Retreat*  
*this year is*  
*last weekend in July,*  
*book now.*