

2018 Autumn Grandmaster Tchoung Ta Tchen

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After Robert Smith's book on Tai Chi came out, my Aikido buddy (Chuck) and I decided to research Taiji instructors in our area. At the time there were only three that we knew of. One of our Aikido students (Brian Hata) overheard us talking about it and mentioned there was a new master coming down from Canada teaching in China town. He was giving a

demonstration and we should check it out.

We skipped our regular Monday Aikido lesson and went to the demonstration. The previous instructor, Master Raymond Chung, had decided not to commute to Seattle any more (from Vancouver) which left the Seattle Tai Chi Association without a teacher. Dave Harris and another student went up to Vancouver to seek out another Taiji instructor and they came across Tchoung Ta Tchen teaching in a park. He accepted their invitation to visit Seattle and possibly teach.

Tchoung gave his demonstration and then asked for challenges! "You try?" Which was customary in his tradition. Tchoung's lineage was from the old Yang Taiji Quan of Yang Shou Hou, the older brother of Yang Cheng Fu who taught the more popular Yang Taiji known today. Well, no challenges so Tchoung started class.



Tchoung & Dave

Chuck and I were sitting on the sidelines as the class started and after a few moments Tchoung stopped class, came over, grabbed us by the hands and said, "Taiji good for you". Then pulled us up to the front row. Needless to say we didn't have a chance to say no. After leading us through some of the

O'mei (Emei/Ermei) Qi Gong, through a translator, he talked about the importance of being relaxed and soft. He demonstrated this by showing how someone couldn't pick you up if you were totally relaxed. Then had the group try it. Chuck and I were the only ones able to do it due to our Aikido training. Tchoung came around and through the translator told us to tell others how we did it. Being really impressed with his skill we signed up for classes.

Early on he didn't speak much English but had several translators. However, once in a while he'd do a dramatic demonstration and all the translators would say was,



Simu - Andy - Sifu

"sifu says to relax." It was clear that something was lost in the translation. One day a young Chinese gentleman joined the class and during one of Tchoung's demonstrations and translation this guy said, "That's not what he said."

Tchoung curious, pulled the kid aside and chatted for a while. Then, we got to witness Tchoung's temper. He was furious that the translators weren't really translating what he was saying. It turned out they didn't want the 'Round Eyes' to get the inner teachings of Taiji (though in hindsight they never really got it).

That's when he started an effort to learn English and make sure we knew what he said and meant. I was one of the first examples ☹. Through the new translator he would show a move and its principles then ask, "You understand?" As an idiot I said I think so. The come back was: Yes, No? You understand? When I said yes the next thing was: "show."

Some of the first, most common, words we heard from him were: *No, Wrong, Good, Stupid, bu hao*, and some Chinese references to our parents which the interpreters refuse to translate.

Later we learned that Tchoung was a body guard for Chiang Kai Shek. In Tchoung's home studio he had a formal picture of him in the front row with Chiang Kai Shek. Tchoung was an old war horse. His sword, cane, staff, and broadsword techniques were very good and efficient. His applications definitely so, no messing around. He had experience in real combat. Due to his O'mei Qi Gong training he could take full power strikes to his torso. It was like hitting a car tire. If he found out guests had martial arts background he'd invite them to punch him.

My first experience of his application was quite a shock. I was use to Karate and Aikido instructors that would stop their punches a centimeter from my face, so I had this total trust of being safe. Tchoung, demonstrating the function of Kou (shoulder technique), told me to punch him. Now, behind me was a raised platform with two steps up. I punched, he deflected and then body slammed me, sending me four feet back onto the platform. He didn't hurt me but as he approached into the movement my thought was, OH SHIT - He's gonna hit me. I didn't feel the impact but as I was sailing back I saw my two feet up in the air thinking, those are my feet. I fell and slid back a with no damage. His power, yet controlled was amazing and scary.



Taiwan Club

Tchoung's applications were very soft (except for the strikes), you didn't feel him slamming you, it was like being a fly on a balloon that just burst. Next moment you were hit or flying without the feeling of *how* it happened. He'd move in and feel like a teddy bear, then the next moment you were airborne. He was also very skilled at nerve techniques since he came from a family tradition of bone and joint healing specialists and herbalists.

Another time he had me attack, he did a backhand rake down the front of my face. It felt like he had traced the back of my skull. I first thought he had broken my nose but he didn't. My eyes were watering to the point I couldn't see anything. This was one of his favorite moves.

During class, after demonstrating a movement, he'd

**THE SOLO FORM IS OUR ALPHABET,
TUISHOU IS READING,
SANSYOU IS WRITING.**

discuss the principles, applications, philosophy, and how the application was an expression of the philosophy.

HISTORY

Tchoung had a large club while in Taiwan and was a senior member of the Taiwan Tai Chi Association. His circle of friends and practice partners were some very well known masters like: Zhen Manjing, Wang Yennien, T.T. Liang, Wang Xujin, Chang Chingling, and William Chen to name a few. Zhen Manjing was very influential in his pushing hands training whom He knew Zhen from the mainland. He learned Xin Yi from his friends Wang Xujin and Yuan Dao as well as Bagua.

Tchoung was an independent and open spirit. While teaching in South Africa he had three schools. Two were formal, one secret for those not permitted to learn martial arts, the native South Africans. One of the videos he gave me was of his club there. The students were doing the



Sifu - Andy

sanshou and looked excellent.

At a young age Tchoung learned from his uncle the Natural style kung fu and some Taiji. He trained holding stances and postures while his uncle would kick his legs to test his structure. His training was very rough and old school. He taught us pretty much the same way. Some of his methods resembled Aikido master Koichi Tohei's ki testing.

Early 1970's Tchoung was invited to Vancouver B.C. to teach by a Qi Gong master who had a school on Cordova street. This master eventually relocated and started another school so Tchoung started his Chinese Tai Chi Chuan Association of Canada at the Cordova studio.

Tchoung believed in sharing and not holding back. Taiji practice is beneficial to all and will help improve, not only our health but also humanity. He believed that in not holding back, and teaching correctly, each generation will improve the art. Each generation should be better than the previous and as time goes on and changes, Taiji will also change and be a positive force in the future. Every practitioner actually has their own style if they follow the principles and practice correctly. He hoped that one day all Taiji would just be called Taiji Quan of China.



Qi Gong Master