



Orchard Kung Fu

The Martial Way of Vitality



Martial Etiquette

The following information may benefit anyone interested in studying the Daoqiquan arts and it will be of particular interest to those of you who will be attending the Gathering of the Circle some for the first time. I would like to share with you some of the things that may make your time with the heads of the Li family system more productive.

Wu De (“Woo duh”) is the Mandarin term for martial virtue or, perhaps, martial etiquette. Martial etiquette came about for many reasons. One of the fundamental reasons, in my opinion, is that a professional warrior, someone who had the capability and responsibility to take another person’s life, would likely be interacting with many others who possessed the exact same capability. This creates a few different situations that require extreme attentiveness to the rules of etiquette.

Every culture values “face,” (the way we feel others perceive us), some to a more obvious extent than others. We all know what unreasonable actions we can take to avoid embarrassment. The bulk of martial artists have always tended to be young, restless, testosterone-filled males looking to prove themselves to others. This breeds a situation where one becomes hyper-vigilant to imagined insult. If one feels one’s “face” is threatened by someone, one may feel the urge to demand reparations no matter the consequences. When “mouth-fighting” begins, the stakes elevate quickly and beyond proportion. A practical consideration is if a warrior does not demonstrate his ability to control a situation, it may erode the respect his peers give him, turning him into a more attractive target or undermining the confidence the public has in his skills (if they are for hire).

Consider the fact that a warrior is carrying weapons and is often surrounded by people who carry weapons. A warrior understands that an attack may occur at any time. He develops a heightened awareness to threatening tones, body language, and other subtle cues that may give him advance warning that his life is in imminent danger. Assassination is always easier than a straight up challenge match. Some martial schools developed rigid protocols about how to handle your weapon and yourself around others to teach students what to look for. If we think logically about it, no school will adopt every form another school uses or even interpret the minutia of each movement the same way. In modern days, these have often become hollow forms, empty of meaning.

What is necessary is to understand how one acts in society such that one places oneself in danger less often (think “defensive driving”) and such that one is able to deploy one’s weapons and tactics with the least hindrance and the most efficacy in every situation. I submit that one who embraces the martial nature of these studies will eventually see the practical value underneath many of the forms of etiquette. When your every martial action could take someone else’s life, and you understand what that means, civility and patience become exceedingly important to you.



Orchard Kung Fu

The Martial Way of Vitality



We may also consider the influence Confucian values may have had on martial society. From a practical point of view, if you do not know your place in a hierarchy, you do not know what your “job” is and you will be less useful to the organization. Every organization requires some form of a chain of command to be effective. The martial society of China adopted the Confucian patriarchal system where the head of the family/school/society, the father/*shifu*/emperor, is responsible for leading the group to prosperity. This leader is expected to act with regard for the best welfare of the followers while the followers are expected to place their trust in the leader. Ideally, the emperor was the emperor because he followed Heaven’s Mandate (acting for the benefit of all according to the dictates of Heaven’s rule) and not because he selfishly gathered power unto himself. The subjects would ideally experience the beneficence of such a ruler and feel no need to fight the bit of societal restraints.

We in the West often feel restricted by martial etiquette requirements. Especially when we see it as something that forces us to accept another culture’s values and traditions. We balk at bowing, at putting another human being on what we personally perceive as a pedestal, at using titular forms of address, at hierarchical demonstrations outside the *kwoon*; the list can become endless. You begin to change your mind when you start thinking of the martial culture as a foreign culture. Think about it. In this circumstance, you try to understand and adopt habits that the local populace finds polite. You do not try to impose your standards of etiquette on them. Showing you are willing to learn their customs demonstrates respect for their way of life and earns you respect, or consideration, in return. In the case of martial arts instructors, at the very least, learning what the instructor you wish to study with thinks is polite manners and attempting to exercise those manners demonstrates your willingness to change. And if you are not willing to change, why would you seek out an instructor of any sort? If you can demonstrate no social grace or responsibility, why would any socially responsible instructor teach you how to maim and kill other people?

Another way to look at it: do you use the same manners around your grandparents that you do around your mates? Would you use the same etiquette and manners in the presence of the Queen of England, the Prime Minister, or the Dalai Lama as you currently do at work, on the subway, on the ball diamond, or in the grocery store? Most people will find they hold themselves to a higher standard of etiquette when they are in the presence of someone they implicitly respect. This respect is never demanded by a true teacher of virtue in the martial traditions; rather it is a respect that arises naturally within the student for the teacher as the student experiences the example of the teacher and his ways. It is a reflection of the internal motivation one has to be a better person when in the presence of the teacher.

Many of us do not know what the teacher thinks is appropriate etiquette. We must rely upon the teacher to show us. After the teacher has shown us, it becomes the responsibility of the senior students to pass on the traditions to the junior and novice students. No teacher worth his mettle likes to discuss proper etiquette toward himself, yet if this task is not undertaken, a great dis-



Orchard Kung Fu

The Martial Way of Vitality



service is eventually revealed to be done to his students when they meet another teacher of the same or similar traditions and they act impolitely.

Shifu Painter has discussed the time traditional Chinese etiquette, as taught to him by his teacher, Master Li, stood him in great stead. I believe it was in the early 70's and he had been attending a tournament in San Francisco. He was invited to attend a supper with some Chinese instructors that night. He met his host and was led through one building into another and through back-ways and alleys to an exclusive and very hard-to-get-to Chinese restaurant. The big Texan with his cowboy hat and boots strolled into the bustling hub-bub of a fully packed Chinese restaurant, and the entire place went silent. It is possible he was the first white man to have entered this establishment. His host wove through the tables to one over in the far corner that was surrounded by serious, hard-looking men dressed in dark suits with significant bulges under their armpits. He recognized several famous masters of Kung-fu and other significant members of the Chinese, 'ahem,' cultural world around the table. The restaurant went back to normal as he sat down, but the people at his table said very little, choosing to mutter and whisper to each other rather than speak openly. A man to his side poured tea for Shifu Painter, and Shifu made a special gesture with the first two fingers of his right hand beside the teacup. At the sight of this gesture, the table exploded into chatter! All of a sudden, the teachers at the table were smiling and boisterous and welcoming! By demonstrating knowledge of their culture, he won acceptance from this very exclusive group. If Master Li had not taken the time to educate his protégé about simple aspects of Chinese culture, and if Shifu Painter had not cared to exercise his knowledge because "he wasn't Chinese," he would have missed significant opportunities and deep friendships that opened up to him because of a seemingly insignificant action and demonstration of etiquette.

There are many more stories I could regale you with. I think I have made my point. Study the seniors at the Gathering and see what they do for their seniors... and for their juniors. If you are not sure how to act, or what a particular tradition is for, ask one of them and they will be happy to let you know. If you are in doubt, just be sincerely respectful and that will be noticed.

A few tidbits for those who are still reading: do not eat before the head teacher or Shifu or your personal teacher unless he gives you leave; do fill others' cups at the table before your own and notice when their cup is emptying; do not point the handle or the spout of a teapot at your teacher; never address YOUR instructor by his or her first name – use their formal title (whether you do so out of class is up to you but speaks to your commitment to the art and your teacher); bow when the instructor enters the room and say, "*Ni hao, Shifu*;" stop what you are doing when you hear the instructor say, "*Ting*;" raise both hands chest level palms toward the instructor and wait patiently for recognition if you have a question; pay attention in class and do not horse around; do not go into long diatribes about what you cannot do or why you are doing it differently than the instructions; perform each task requested with the spirit intended; help your juniors; do not "correct" your teacher in public, rather ask seniors or your teacher for clarification in private. There are many more tidbits and many reasons for each of these



Orchard Kung Fu

The Martial Way of Vitality



injunctions. Just sincerely do your best; the first violation is only one broken limb... just kidding!

A word on forms of address: What do you call whom? In the Daoqiquan world, if you are a direct student of Shifu Painter, you call him “*Shifu*” which means “father.” If you are an indirect student of Shifu Painter, perhaps a student of one of the Gompa Shifu, or of one of the instructors from around the world, or of a study group leader, you may call Shifu Painter “*Shigong* Painter.” This means “teacher’s teacher” and entitles him to wear a white sash at formal occasions. If you have never studied at a branch school or at the Gompa, you may show respect by calling Shifu Painter “Dr. Painter” because he is not formally your teacher and you do not wish to mis-represent yourself as one of his formal students. Within Daoqiquan, below Shifu Painter, the only instructors ranked as *Shifu* (“Teacher,” yellow sash) are Shifu Marshall, Garza, and Castaldo. This is their rank within the family and their title of address to their direct students. At a formal ceremony held only on Founder’s Day, instructors may be granted the rank of *Shige* (“Older Brother,” red sash) within the Daoqiquan Jiulong Baguazhang. This is not usually a form of address; it is a designation of the lowest rank within the Daoqiquan hierarchy. All Daoqiquan instructors (except Shifu Painter) can be appropriately called “*Shizi*.” This means “one qualified to teach” (something in the Daoqiquan family art). So, to sum up, Shifu Painter is “Shifu” if you are his personal student or “Shigong” if you are a lineage student and “Doctor” if you are visiting; Shifu Marshall, Garza and Castaldo are “*Shifu*” to their direct students and “*Shizi*” to everyone else in the lineage; Branch instructors and study group leaders are “*Shizi*” to all students. A final note: “*shifu*” can be written with a character that means “father” or with one that means “paid teacher;” in Daoqiquan, only full teachers of the entire art are entitled to “Shifu/father.”

With the greatest respect,

Dr. Yancy Orchard
Shizi, Jiulong Baguazhang

© 2012 [Nine Dragon Baguazhang](#)