

# My Chayon-Ryu experience

by Alberto Borjas

It was early 2013, I was in my mid-fifties and after a life of practicing martial arts I was feeling the negative effects of the hard training on my body. I was almost ready to quit my training when I remembered a magazine article I had read some years ago about Chayon- Ryu, the “natural way” method of training martial arts created by Grandmaster Kim Soo more than 40 years ago in Houston, Texas. I visited their website and I saw pictures of people older than me participating actively in classes alongside young students which is very unusual in today’s martial arts realm. I decided to call to the Chayon- Ryu headquarters and Grandmaster Kim Soo himself answered the phone. He invited me to visit the Dojang the following day. It was his Wednesday morning class. Grandmaster Kim welcomed me at his office with a smile and invited me to participate in his class. Ten years had passed and I have rarely missed that Wednesday morning class.

I think I have had a different learning experience than most Chayon Ryu students and I would like to share it with everyone. When I came to Chayon Ryu I had almost 40 years training martial arts and that experience gave me the elements to compare and contrast as well as understand how Chayon Ryu stands apart in the world of the martial arts.

I have spent all my adult life training and teaching martial arts. When I was in my teens I started learning karate, eventually earned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan in Shorin- Ryu, and when I finished High School decided I wanted to become a martial arts teacher. I earned a degree on Pedagogy with a major on Physical Education and started teaching in 1980. In 1987 Taekwondo was introduced in Cuba and I became a practitioner of the Korean Martial Art. I became a full time Taekwondo teacher and coach

in 1988. I was one of the first Taekwondo Black Belts in my country and in 1995 became one of the first Master Instructors certified by the Kukkiwon (Taekwondo World Headquarters in Seoul, Korea). When I came to the US in 1996 I continued teaching and learning martial arts. I was a Martial Arts instructor for the Chuck Norris KickStart Kids Foundation in Houston, Texas for 10 Years. I practiced Judo, Krav Maga and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, where I hold an advanced rank. I have experienced some other martial arts like Kendo (Kumdo), Tai chi and Chin Na. I believe I began my training in Chayon Ryu with a really unique perspective.

What is Chayon-Ryu?

Chayon Ryu is a Martial Arts system created by Grandmaster Kim Soo, a third generation Korean master, in Houston, Texas in 1968. Chayon - Ryu is celebrating this year its 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Chayon- Ryu means “Natural Way” and the reason why it became apparent to me since the first class I participated in.

Grandmaster Kim Soo, who is 83 years old and still teaching daily at his Chayon Ryu Headquarters Dojang, based his method of teaching on the use of the natural movements of the human body, hence its name. The body natural movements found in ordinary activities like walking, running, skipping, twisting and throwing are used to perform the martial arts techniques. This method will be easier for the students because it allows them to learn from body movements they already naturally have but more importantly it reduces the risk of injuries due to contrived or unnatural movements. This is the most important difference of Chayon- Ryu , in my opinion, compared to the traditional methods of teaching martial arts.

Traditional methods of teaching martial arts don't take into consideration the design of the human body and the risk of getting injured while performing their techniques. It is very common in martial arts to get spine or joint injuries by performing techniques like kicking or punching using faulty methods. One of the most frequent injuries in martial arts, for instance, is ligaments tears on the knee of the supporting leg by performing kicks without rotating the supporting foot. The supporting foot should rotate freely on the floor on every kick to avoid knee injuries.

Another example is when punching, striking or blocking with the rear hand in a front stance the rear foot should pivot to allow the rotation of the upper body following that forward momentum and not to cause strain on the lower back.

These are just two examples. It is important to understand the proper body mechanics on the execution of every technique and techniques should be in harmony with the design of the human body.

Sometimes martial artists are working against their body natural motions and that will cause problems in the long run. That's the main reason you won't find many students passed their prime in martial arts classes.

In modern society we train martial arts for health and to be able to enjoy life at an advanced age. The methods of training martial arts should help us to accomplish that goal. Grandmaster Kim Soo found that traditional methods of training were not designed with that purpose and that motivated him to the creation of Chayon-Ryu.

Once you understand the philosophy of the Chayon- Ryu method and you follow that logical and reasonable path you will get the results you

are looking for without taking unnecessary risks. The Chayon -Ryu method minimize the risk of injuries maximizing the results.

## Principles of Training

Chayon -Ryu is a Martial Arts System based on Principles. The Chayon-Ryu principles discovered by Grandmaster Kim Soo, who has been teaching uninterruptedly since 1955, are beyond styles of martial arts. Grandmaster Kim Soo teaches the Chayon-Ryu principles in any martial arts school regardless the style. Those principles are universal because they are based on the human natural body movements and the design of the human body which is only one.

Sometimes people confuse the different ways to perform a technique according to their styles with principles. They say that is the way we do it in our style. That is a mistake. There are different ways to perform a technique but the principles are always the same because the design of the human body is only one. If you follow the proper principles there will be no confusion and you will know the difference between right or wrong.

Chayon- Ryu is taught based on principles and the students will learn based on those principles rather to try imitating the instructor movements. The latter is the most common way of learning martial arts: the students are going to imitate the instructor's moves.

Most of the time the instructors will not have an answer why a particular move if perform in a certain way, he will probably say: "that's the way we do it in our style, I was taught like this or it always been like that". As a result wrong movements are repeated and mistakes are perpetuated.

In Chayon- Ryu instructors will have the students understand the principles and recognize the mistakes so they can correct themselves.

The Chayon Ryu method, because is based on their natural body movements the students already have, makes the learning process easier and more enjoyable for them which guarantees more retention. In most martial arts schools the process is so hard for the students, especially at the beginning, that a great number of students are going to get discouraged and quit and in some cases they are not going to consider learning martial arts anymore. The Chayon- Ryu method ensures that will not happen. Once the students stay long enough and experience the mental and physical benefits of that training they will never quit a make Chayon- Ryu their way of life.

### Lifestyle Martial Art

Chayon- Ryu is a Lifestyle Martial Arts System (Sang Hwal Mu Do). Chayon Ryu emphasizes mental and physical balance rather than focusing on competition.

Most martial arts these days are sport competition oriented and the real purpose of training martial arts is neglected. In modern times martial arts were originally conceived as methods for personal development, that's the reason of the particle "Do" at the end of their names, which in a philosophical sense means "the Way", as a way to live our lives. Their original purpose was not the sport competition. Eventually the competition took precedence and the martial arts drifted away from their roots.

There are many students these days that go to a martial arts school looking for personal improvement and they end up learning how to

compete in a martial sport. There are not martial classes catered for the adult population and all the focus is on kids and sport competition. That will not happen in Chayon-Ryu. You will find students way past their prime training alongside young students in every Chayon- Ryu class.

Chayon-Ryu offers a very comprehensive curriculum that includes a great number of classical forms: Chinese, Okinawan/ Japanese and Korean, One-Steps: Traditional and Practical (which are unique to Chayon-Ryu), Hapkido, Self-defense and Free Sparring. The Chayon- Ryu curriculum can keep interested any student eager to learn for a lifetime.

Chayon Ryu is not just another style of martial arts, it is a new approach to train martial arts in modern times. Chayon- Ryu combines physical training with philosophical insight to fight the challenges of modern day society.

### Chayon- Ryu Self Defense

Grandmaster Kim Soo blended his extensive knowledge of the Asian classical Martial Arts with a common sense approach to create a unique self-defense system. The Chayon Ryu method of Self Defense combines theories and techniques of Chinese Chuan Fa, Okinawan karate, Japanese Kendo and Korean taekwondo as well as the grappling arts Judo/Jujutsu and Aikido/Hapkido.

The philosophy of the Chayon Ryu Method of Self Defense is based on the natural response of the human body to the different forms of physical aggression in a realistic scenario.

Since there's not competition in Chayon -Ryu the training from day one is self-defense oriented as opposed to most modern martial arts that focus on sport competition.

The Chayon- Ryu Method of Self Defense contrast with others in that it does not try to find a great number of different responses against every form of aggression. The philosophy of grandmaster Kim Soo is that: “it’s better to have one technique that works in ten different situations that ten techniques for every situation”. The Chayon-Ryu Self Defense Method emphasizes learning a few basic core tactics and techniques that can be perform instinctively and adapted to numerous situations.

The techniques in the Chayon- Ryu Self-defense method are simple, easy to learn and doable for any person regardless of their age, physical condition or limitations as opposed to most modern martial arts that rely on physical strength or athleticism.

## Conclusions

The Chayon- Ryu Martial Arts system has no parallels in today martial arts realm. Rooted in the ancient Asian martial arts, Chayon- Ryu is a true lifestyle system for modern day practitioners, a real jewel in in the world of martial arts these days

## Epilogue

After 10 years I incorporated Chayon-Ryu training in my life, I can say that I feel rejuvenated. I’m 67 years old and enjoying Martial Arts training like I would be ten years younger. When I have my regular physical exams the only Doctor’s recommendation is keep doing what you are doing. I don’t follow a very strict diet, take vitamins or supplements. I’m not a fan of the gym. I do Chayon-Ryu. Chayon- Ryu is my way of life.

