

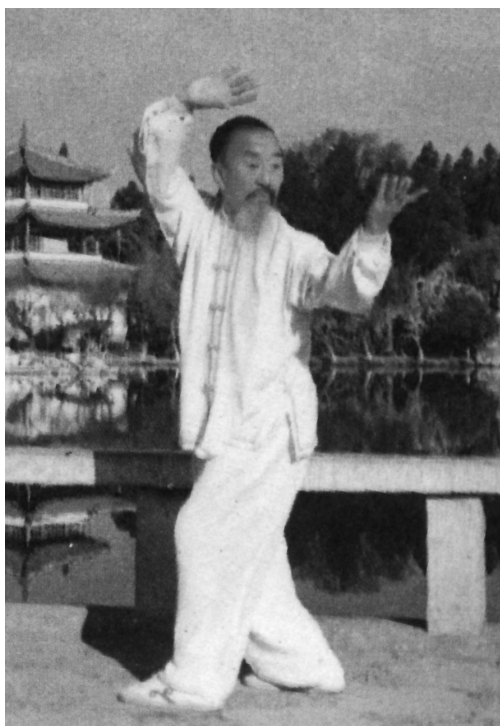


Pa Kua Chang

JOURNAL

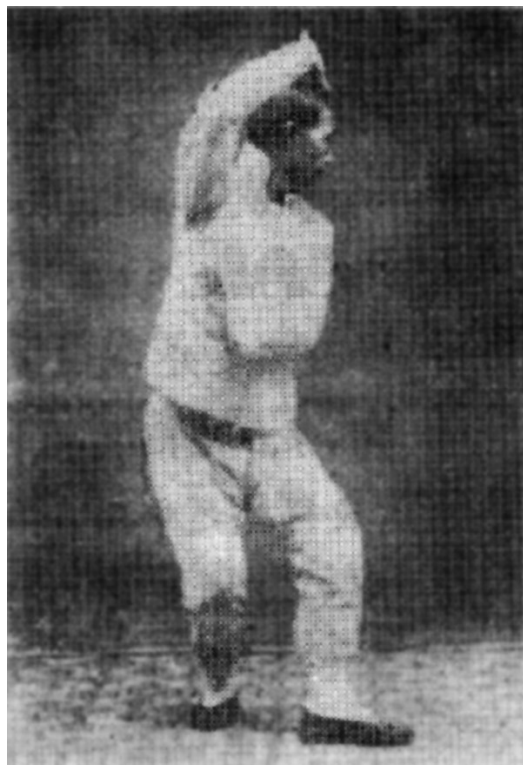
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Ba Gua Zhang's Eight Mother Palms

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by John Bracy



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About the Pa Kua Chang Journal

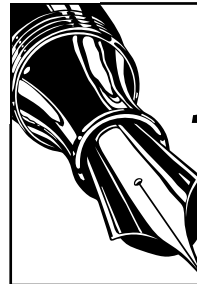
The *Pa Kua Chang Journal* is published six times a year. Each issue features an interview with, or article by, one or more Ba Gua Zhang instructor(s) from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, and/or Canada. The interviews will report on each instructor's background, current program, training methods and teaching philosophy. By utilizing this format, the intention is to give students an opportunity to get to know prospective teachers and to let teachers possibly gain insights and ideas from learning about the activities of their colleagues.

Chinese names and terms will be romanized using the pinyin system of romanization except when an instructor prefers his name romanized differently. The title of the Journal appears in the Wade Giles system of romanization as it was the system we started with and we kept the original title. Whenever possible, Chinese characters will be listed in parentheses following the first appearance of Chinese terms and names in each article.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this journal are those of the instructors being interviewed and not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

We solicit comments and/or suggestions.
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**Editor's
Corner**

My Mistake

In the last issue I had two mistakes in Kent Howard's article on page 18. The first was that in the photo sequence, photos 3 and 4 are reversed. Secondly the characters for Xin Xin Xiang Ying were incorrect. I used:

信心相應

however, the correct characters should have been:

心心相應

My apologies to Kent.

New Catalog

Those of you who have been loyal subscribers for a while may have noticed that with each issue you receive we have been adding more and more items to our catalog. We are trying to sell more items for two reasons. One it helps bring some money in to support the Journal. We do not have paid advertising in this Journal like in other magazines and so our only revenue is from subscriptions. Due to the rising cost of paper and postage, the cost of producing this Journal has gradually increased every year. However, I do not want to raise the subscription price. So in selling items in our catalog that are of interest to our readers, we are helping to keep the Journal going without having to raise the subscription rate.

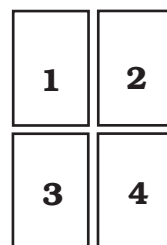
The second reason I have been carrying some of the new items in the catalog is that I have frequently been asked by readers, "Do you know where I can get good weapons?," "Do you know where I can get good books on Chinese Medicine?," "Do you know of any good books on Chinese philosophy?" etc. We are starting to provide these things for our readers convenience.

As for our own projects, Park Bok Nam's new book and video tape *The Fundamentals of Pa Kua Chang, Volume II* will be available on the first of December.

We have had a tremendous response to our pre-publication sale and are looking forward to sending that book and tape to all who have ordered it.

Coming in February, look for Tim Cartmell's outstanding presentation of throwing techniques in his book and video: *Effortless Combat Throws*.

On the Cover



- 1) Fu Zhen Song holding the "monkey posture"**
- 2) Sha Guo Cheng demonstrates the "lion" posture**
- 3) Sun Lu Tang performing the "snake" posture**
- 4) Sun Xi Kun in the "upper and lower standing palm" posture**

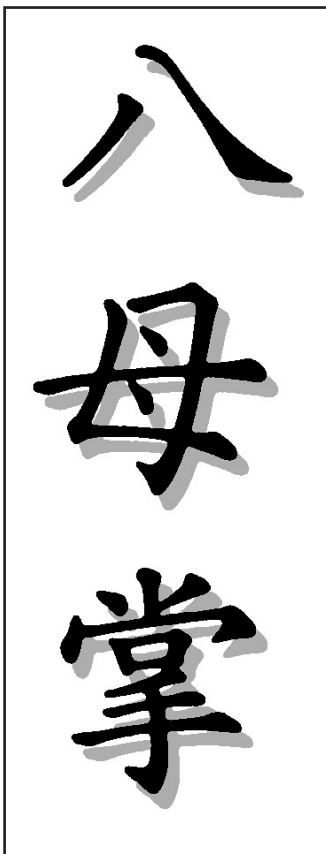
Ba Gua Zhang's Eight Mother Palms

The concept, idea and/or practice of Ba Gua Zhang's "Eight Mother Palms" has different meaning within each of the different styles and lineages of Ba Gua Zhang. Therefore, presenting *the* Eight Mother Palms is impossible because there is no such thing as *the* Eight Mother Palms in Ba Gua. Every system of Ba Gua approaches the theory and practice of the Eight Mother Palms in a different manner and so we cannot categorically describe the Eight Mother Palms and be fair to all practitioners. In this article, I will attempt to present a few of the most prominent theories relating to the Eight Mother Palms and describe how these theories are applied in practice by some of the schools of Ba Gua.

Because the name "Eight Mother Palms" implies "that from which all else is born," we can see the significance the Mother Palms might have on the entire system and strategy of the art. In many schools of Ba Gua Zhang, the entire art is "born" out of the eight "mothers" and the eight mothers each have a connection to one of the eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing* (易經). As in the Chinese philosophy for which the art is named, the eight trigrams are combined to make the sixty-four hexagrams and the hexagrams are representative of the "ten thousand things" (i.e., all possibilities). In many schools of Ba Gua, this theory and its underlying philosophy become very important to the practice and application of the art. However, not all practitioners feel the same way about these philosophical connections. Some valid schools of Ba Gua Zhang do not even have any practice or theory which they relate to the Eight Mother Palms. Therefore, before we dive into a discussion of the "theory" and practice of the Eight Mother Palms, it is appropriate that we take a look at how philosophical connections to the practice of the physical martial arts are viewed by various practitioners.

The Philosophical Connection

Among Ba Gua enthusiasts there is always a debate about how the physical art of Ba Gua Zhang relates theoretically to the eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing*, for which the art is named. Out of this debate, we typically run into three different general schools of thought. There are those that believe that there is absolutely no connection between physical martial arts and Chinese



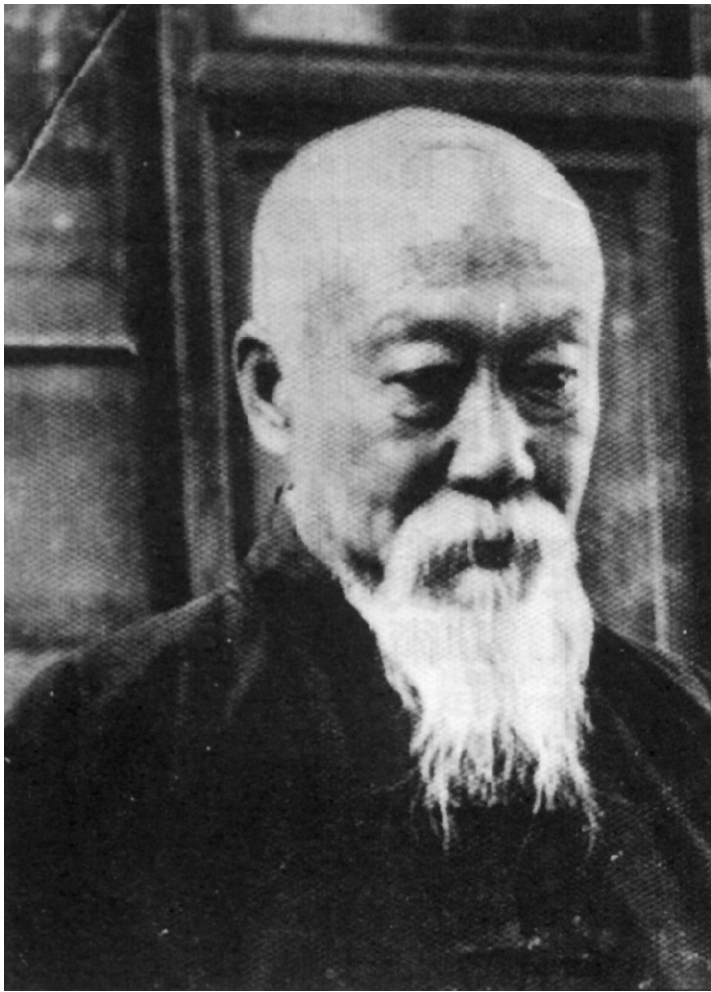
philosophy, there are those that believe that there is a deep connection because the internal arts are rooted in the principles of the philosophy, and then there are those who take the beliefs of the second group to grander proportions by relating all aspects of every part of the body and physical movement to philosophy, geomancy, and cosmology. So, basically we encounter two extremes and a "middle of the road."

In addition to the controversy among the three groups described above, there is also a great deal of debate within the "middle of the road" groups who do believe that the philosophy does relate to the practice. These debates arise because the various groups have differing views of exactly how, and to what degree, the philosophy relates to the physical art, the physical body, and the applications. However, in light of the vastness of the *ba gua* philosophy, this debate seems trivial. The *ba gua* philosophy is such a universal model for the patterns of nature, natural existence, and human nature, that the number the correspondences one can draw from it are endless. Therefore,

because one school, one instructor, or one practitioner sees the relationships one way and others might see them differently, does not mean that one is right and one is wrong. The one thing the philosophy of *ba gua* should tell us is that everything is constantly changing and that all possibilities should be explored. Therefore, in the next section of this article, instead of talking about exactly what the correspondences between the trigrams and the physical art are, we will talk about why some might believe in these correspondences and why others do not.

The Debate

The first group we encounter when we bring up the topic of the Ba Gua Zhang's relationship with philosophical principles are those who say that the physical martial arts have absolutely no connection with Chinese philosophy. While this group does believe in martial arts principles and the study of physical body mechanics, it does not necessarily believe that the understanding of martial arts is aided by studying connections between martial arts practice and the eight trigrams, *Yi Jing*, five elements, or *yin/yang* theory. This group argues that the martial artists who developed and practice these arts were uneducated farmers who became very good at martial arts because



Ba Gua Zhang scholar Zeng Xing San was the first to write about the philosophical connections between Ba Gua Zhang and Yi Jing theory.

they spent a lot of time practicing and applying the arts. They developed a very efficient fighting method based on the trials and errors of those who came before them and their own personal experiences. Because they were uneducated, they were not prone to think about any type of philosophical connections to what they were doing. Most of them could not even read. They were good because they had a systematic method, practiced hard, and refined their skills through practical fighting experiences.

This first group will continue their argument by saying that the arts of Tai Ji Quan, Xing Yi Quan, and Ba Gua Zhang, had little connection to Chinese philosophy until scholars (like Sun Lu Tang (孫祿堂), who was the first to publish publicly about these connections) began constructing these philosophical correspondences. Many of the "nonbelievers" in philosophical connections to martial arts will tell you that the real fighting arts of Tai Ji, Xing Yi, and Ba Gua were severely diluted when these scholars came on the scene. They will usually admit that correspondences can be constructed, however, they do not believe that these correspondences are of any great value to practical martial arts study. They believe that these correspondences were not part of the martial arts originally, but were added later by scholars who practice

the martial arts for health. Their attitude is that, "people who are good at martial arts are good because they practice martial arts, not because they read philosophy."

This group continues by saying that when scholars started practicing martial arts for health and writing about martial arts philosophy, it brought the martial arts out of the realistic fighting mode and into people's heads. People began to *think* about martial arts instead of *practice* real fighting arts. While some degree of martial arts thought and research is valuable, practitioners who frown on philosophical connections believe that many who have written about these things have gone too far overboard. These practitioners believe that the time thinking about martial arts is better spent studying physical body mechanics, alignments, and connections, not trigrams and hexagrams.

If we take a look at these topics from a historical perspective, the individuals who say that philosophy was not originally a part of internal martial arts do have a case. Before we move on to discuss another side of the debate, we will examine exactly how the connections between the martial art Ba Gua Zhang and the Eight Trigrams of the *Yi Jing* might have occurred.

The Origin of the Philosophical Connection

At the same time in history that scholars began to write about martial arts, the "martial arts for health" phenomenon in China was beginning to grow and so in many instances the internal arts were indeed taken out of the realm of realistic fighting applications. It is historical fact that prior to Sun Lu Tang's writing, the majority of educated people in China looked down



Ji Feng Xiang (seated, second from right) was an Yi Jing philosopher and friend to Cheng Ting Hua who help Cheng develop the "Nine Palaces" branch of this Ba Gua

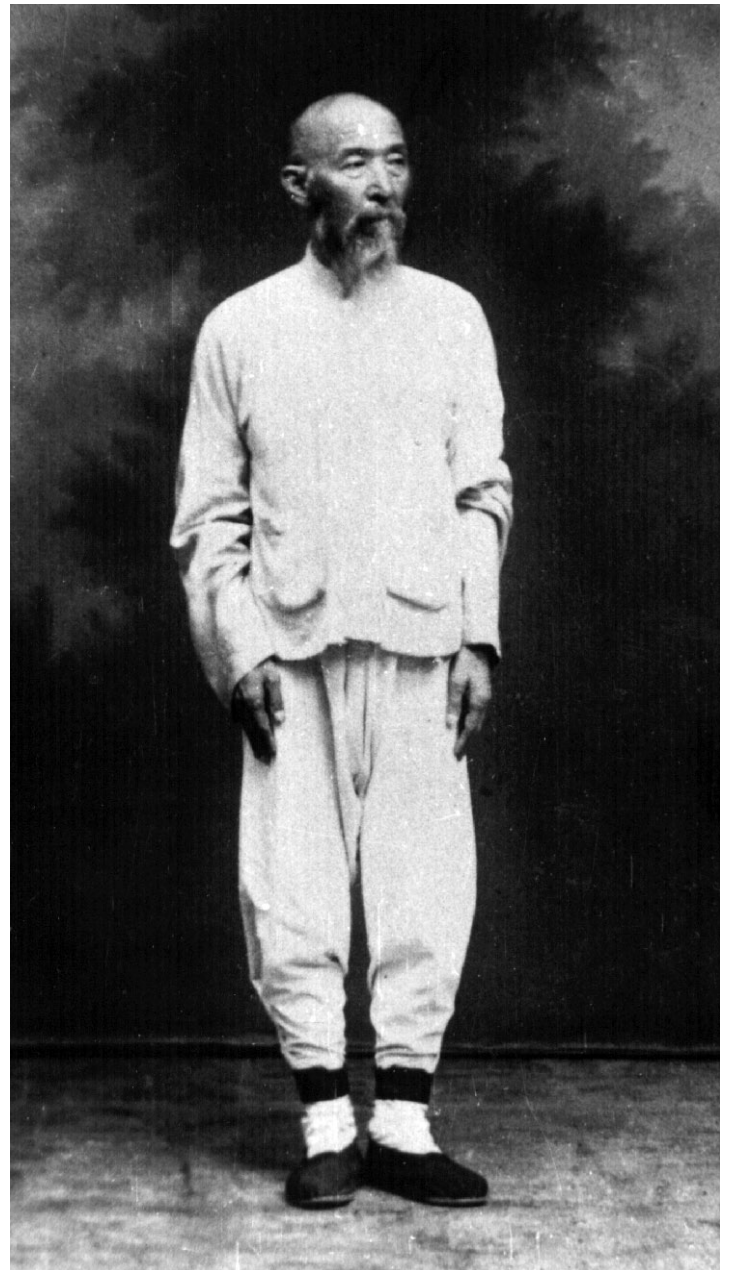
on martial artists and the martial arts. Sun himself wrote about this in the forward to his first book *Xing Yi Quan Xue (The Study of Form Mind Boxing)* published in 1915. Sun said, "There was a prejudice in the old days that literates despised martial arts as martial artists were short on literary learning." So it is probably true that prior to the early 1900's the martial artist who were best known for their martial arts skill did not think too much about philosophy.

Another theory related to the connection between Ba Gua Zhang and the Eight Trigrams, which many martial arts historians and scholars take to be fact concerning the origins of Ba Gua Zhang, is that Dong Hai Chuan (董海川) did not originally call his art "Ba Gua Zhang" and talked little, if any, about philosophical correspondences when he first started teaching his art. There is some documented evidence, written by second generation instructor Zeng Xing San (曾省三) and currently owned by Professor Kang Ge Wu (康戈武), that the art we know today as Ba Gua Zhang was originally called *Zhuan Zhang* (轉掌 - rotating palm). Later the name was changed to *Ba Gua Zhuan Zhang* and then later shortened to *Ba Gua Zhang*. It is not clear whether or Dong Hai Chuan changed the name himself, or if his students changed it.

As far as documented evidence of the philosophical connection between the martial art Ba Gua Zhang and the eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing* is concerned, the first known occurrence of the *ba gua* philosophy as it relates to the martial art of Ba Gua Zhang appeared in an unpublished text called *Ba Gua Zhuan Zhang Hui Lan* (八卦轉掌匯覽) written by Zeng Xing San (1862-1951). Zeng Xing San, who was also known as Zeng Zeng Qi (曾增啓), was a well known Manchurian scholar who worked in the Palace of Su and began his study of Ba Gua Zhang with Yin Fu (尹福). Zeng was highly educated and in the imperial examinations he had reached the second highest level of achievement. While Zeng was studying with Yin Fu, he was taken to see Dong Hai Chuan on many occasions and discussed the principles of the art with Dong.

After the fall of the Qing government (1911), Zeng Xing San was out of a job and thus had a lot of time on his hands. To occupy himself, Zeng began to write down all that he learned from Dong Hai Chuan and Yin Fu. In his manuscript, Zeng used the theory of the *Yi Jing* to explain the martial art of Ba Gua Zhang. This book was also the first known book to contain the 36 songs and 48 methods of Ba Gua Zhang. His handwritten manuscript was later given to his friend Guo Gu Min (郭古民). Guo Gu Min in turn gave the manuscript to his younger classmate Li Zi Ming (李子鳴) and Li Zi Ming gave it to Professor Kang Ge Wu of the Beijing Martial Arts Research Institute. Kang says that in the book, Zeng explains that Dong Hai Chuan did not relate his martial art to the theory of the eight trigrams until late in his life.

Another scholar who had a great influence on the way the martial art of Ba Gua Zhang was combined with Chinese philosophy was Cheng Ting Hua's (程庭華



Sun Lu Tang wrote the first publically published documents which related Chinese philosophy and internal martial arts

) friend and student, Ji Feng Xiang (姬鳳翔). Ji was a Chinese astrologer and *Yi Jing* scholar who used his knowledge to help Cheng Ting Hua develop the "Nine Palace" branch of his Ba Gua Zhang. In this branch of Cheng Ting Hua's Ba Gua Zhang, the theories of the *ba gua* and *Yi Jing* are closely related to all aspects of practice. The modern day representative of this school in Beijing, eighty-six year old Liu Xing Han (劉興漢), has notebooks full of diagrams and explanations of how these philosophical principles relate to the martial arts. Ji Feng Xiang's scholarly influence on Cheng Ting Hua was also important because it lead to Sun Lu Tang writing the first publicly published documents which related Daoist philosophical principles to the martial arts.

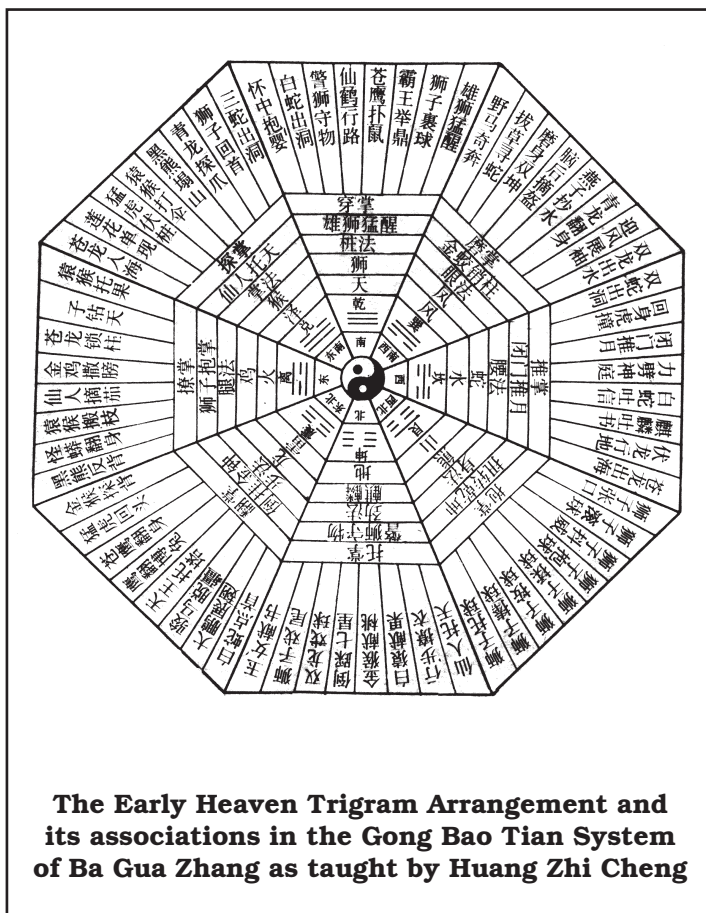
Sun Lu Tang's daughter, Sun Jian Yun (孫劍雲), said that it was Cheng Ting Hua who told Sun in 1891,

“The boxing skills of our school are closely related with the theory of the *Yi Jing*. If you want to climb the holy platform, it is necessary for you to study the origin and understand the theory of the *Yi Jing*. I know that some people in Sichuan Province are especially skilled in these theories. You should travel there.”

Later, in 1894, Sun went to Sichuan Province and Wu Dang mountain to study the *Yi Jing*. While in Sichuan he met a monk named Zhi Zhen (知貞) and studied *Yi Jing* theory. After a short stay in Sichuan, Sun traveled to Wu Dang mountain in Hubei Province. At Wu Dang, Sun studied the “immortality skill” of Daoism with the chief Daoist at the temple, Jing Xu (靜虛).

Taking Cheng Ting Hua’s words to heart, Sun Lu Tang had studied the theories of Daoist philosophy and contemplated how these theories are related to the styles of martial arts that he had been taught. He wrote about many of his theories in the five books that he published (the first being published in 1915, the last in 1927). Although Sun wrote about these connections to some degree, his presentation and style were such that there was not a very clear message about exactly how the philosophy related directly to the martial arts practice and application. His analogies leave much to interpretation and I would assume this was probably done purposefully because any tight analogies or interpretations would limit the vast philosophy and the art of Ba Gua Zhang.

With the exception of Sun Lu Tang and a few others,



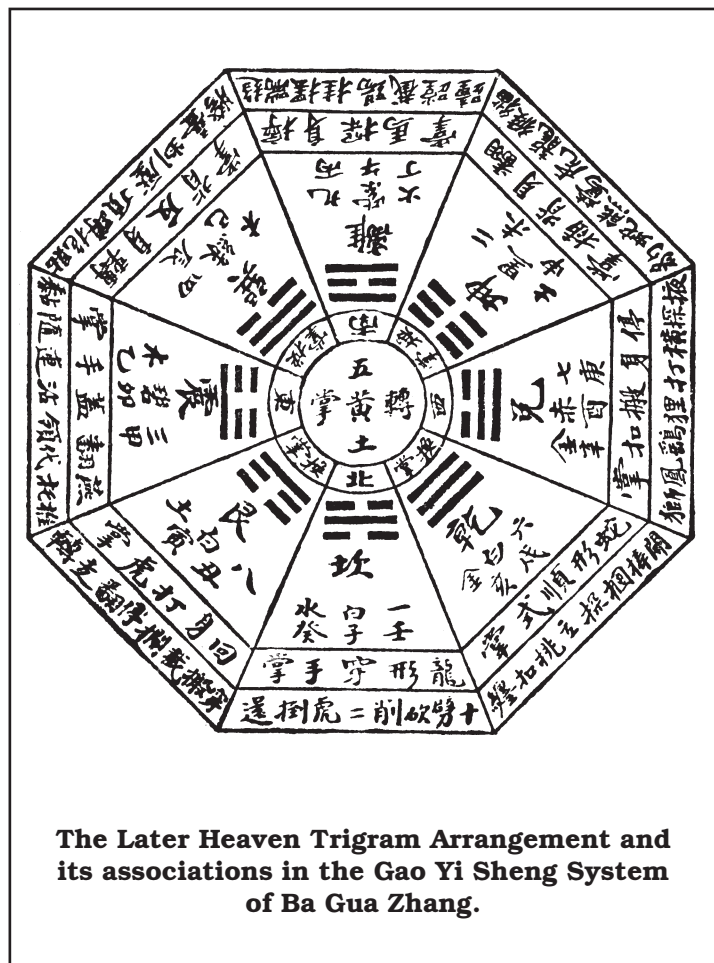
The Early Heaven Trigram Arrangement and its associations in the Gong Bao Tian System of Ba Gua Zhang as taught by Huang Zhi Cheng

most of the scholars who have practiced and taught the internal martial arts since the early part of this century have not been known as great fighters. This fact has led some to believe that studying the philosophy does not help understand the fighting arts. When the scholars, who primarily practiced the arts for health, began writing about the martial arts relationships with Chinese philosophy, in many instances, their correspondences had little to do with actual fighting application, theory, or strategy, so it is reasonable that some practitioners would adapt this attitude, however, this was not always the case.

Most martial arts theories, whether handed down by scholars or fighters, are very sound and very applicable to the real execution of martial arts. Problems arise when individuals try to tie martial arts fighting and application too tightly or too meticulously to philosophical concepts. Both the boxing and the philosophy are such that they need room to breath. The art of boxing has too many variables and the Chinese philosophy allows too vast an interpretation for any association to be too extreme. This extremism brings us to the second school of thought in this debate.

The Debate Continues

Since the dawn of the "martial arts for health" movement in the 1920's, there have been scholars, intellectuals, and researchers who have become fascinated with the internal martial arts and their "mysteries." In order to try and explain these mysteries (or in many cases shroud them deeper in mystery)



The Later Heaven Trigram Arrangement and its associations in the Gao Yi Sheng System of Ba Gua Zhang.

these scholars have borrowed theories from Chinese philosophy. Not many of these individuals are especially known for practical martial arts skill, however, they have devised endless correspondences between the eight trigrams and martial arts practice in all its various facets.

A typical scenario would be that someone who is more interested in philosophy and thinking about martial arts than actual practicing the physical martial arts studies from a teacher who teaches Ba Gua but does not say much about philosophy. The teacher does not talk about the philosophy for one of two reasons:

- A) He does not feel it is important.
- B) He feels that the student needs a strong foundation in the physical skills before the philosophy can be understood.

The student feels that since the art is called "Ba Gua," there must be correspondences to the Eight Trigrams of the *Yi Jing* and so he begins to conduct his own research and finds correspondences. Since the philosophy is a very universal model, there are bound to be numerous correspondences that he will discover. Depending on the student's depth of understanding about the art of Ba Gua Zhang as it is practiced for both martial and internal cultivation purposes, he may or may not come up with useful and valid connections. Later this individual obtains students of his own, teaches a form, and spends a lot of time vocalizing all of the philosophical correspondences he has discovered. His student's think he "knows" a lot because of all the intellectual concepts he can relate about the art. Unfortunately, in many instances, the students can talk about the art all day, but cannot really do much physically.

Some of this second group's intellectualizing has led to interesting relationships and helpful correspondences,

others are interesting to think about, but do not seem to serve much practical purpose. Unfortunately, many of these individuals have gone overboard in their intellectualizations and have created esoteric language and mysterious symbology without clear interpretation. In most instances this degree of mental concentration on the physical art has brought too much complexity to something that should be fairly straight forward. Sun Lu Tang, who was known for bringing philosophy to the martial arts, had a one word answer when people asked him about the "secrets" of the internal martial arts - his answer: "practice."

On the positive side, the scholars who have studied the internal martial arts and drawn philosophical correspondences have helped to broaden the martial arts and the martial artist's perception of the arts. These individuals are somewhat responsible for bringing the concepts of martial morality and martial virtue to the eyes and ears of the practitioners. Without the philosophy and the scholars who teach it, the martial arts might have only been handed down to bullies and thugs. So one cannot say that individuals who intellectualize more than they practice or apply the martial arts do not have things to teach us all.

The Middle of the Road

The third school of thought in this debate believes that there is a valuable connection between the martial arts and Chinese philosophy, however, they keep it simple. They do not go overboard in drawing an overabundance of intricate correspondences and relationships, yet they believe the relationships to be significant and of value to the practitioner. Usually these instructors ensure that their students have a strong foundation and experience in the physical practice before they begin talking about philosophy.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Nature</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Direction</u>
☰	Qian Gua	Heaven	Creative	Beginning of Winter	9 p.m.	NW
☷	Kun Gua	Earth	Receptive	Starting of Fall	3 p.m.	SW
☵	Kan Gua	Water	Abysmal	Absolute Winter	12 p.m.	North
☲	Li Gua	Fire	Clinging	Mid Summer	12 noon	South
☳	Zhen Gua	Thunder	Arousing	Dividing of Spring	6 a.m.	East
☶	Gen Gua	Mountain	Keeping Still	Starting of Spring	3 a.m.	NE
☴	Xun Gua	Wind	Gentle	Starting of Summer	9 a.m.	SE
☱	Dui Gua	Lake	Joyful	Dividing of Fall	6 p.m.	West

Some Standard Eight Trigram Relationships

Beginners need to build a base of physical knowledge and skill before they can appreciate and understand how the philosophical concepts relate to the martial art. Since my own school of Ba Gua, the method of Lu Shui Tian as taught by Park Bok Nam, falls into this category, I will provide some examples from Park's teaching as it is the most familiar to me.

Park Bok Nam believes that the art of Ba Gua Zhang was founded on the theoretical principles of *yin/yang*, *ba gua* (eight trigrams), and *wu xing* (five elements). He refers to these three concepts in Chinese philosophy as the theoretical "trinity" upon which all Ba Gua Zhang strategy, training, and technique is based. Park believes that every aspect of Ba Gua Zhang adheres to the principles of this trinity. If one component is missing, the practice, technique, or application will be unbalanced and incomplete. In this regard, he makes an analogy to sustainable life on earth. He says that the sun and the moon are represented by the *yin* and *yang*. The five elements represents the earth, and the constant rotational movement of the sun and moon around the earth is symbolized by the *Ba Gua*. Just as life could not exist without all three of these components (sun and moon, earth, and constant motion), Park says that a Ba Gua technique which does not contain all three principles of the trinity is "dead."

A few examples of the philosophical trinity not being complete in an application of a martial arts technique would be as follows:

1) If a practitioner executes a technique and does not obtain the most efficient angle of attack, the *ba gua* theory of utilizing angles in positioning the body optimally has not been followed. The theory and angles and linear motion is expressed in the Fu Xi, or "early heaven" arrangement of the trigrams.

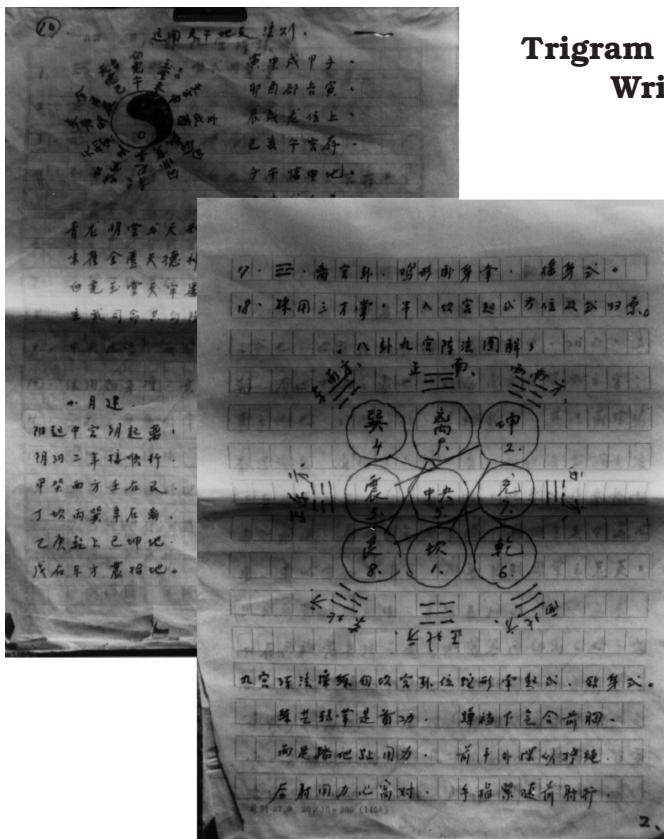
2) If in executing the applications the practitioner does not use the rotational, circling, and spiraling principles to overcome his opponent with the least amount of force, resistance, and invasiveness, the *ba gua* theory of utilizing circular and rotational motions is being ignored. The theory of circular and cyclical patterns of motion is expressed in the King Wen, or "later heaven," arrangement of the trigrams.

3) If in the execution of a technique, the practitioner focuses too strongly on one direction and gets hit from another, the *ba gua* theory of extending awareness to all eight directions has been forgotten. This theory is expressed in the balancing of eight directions expressed in the early heaven arrangement of the trigrams.

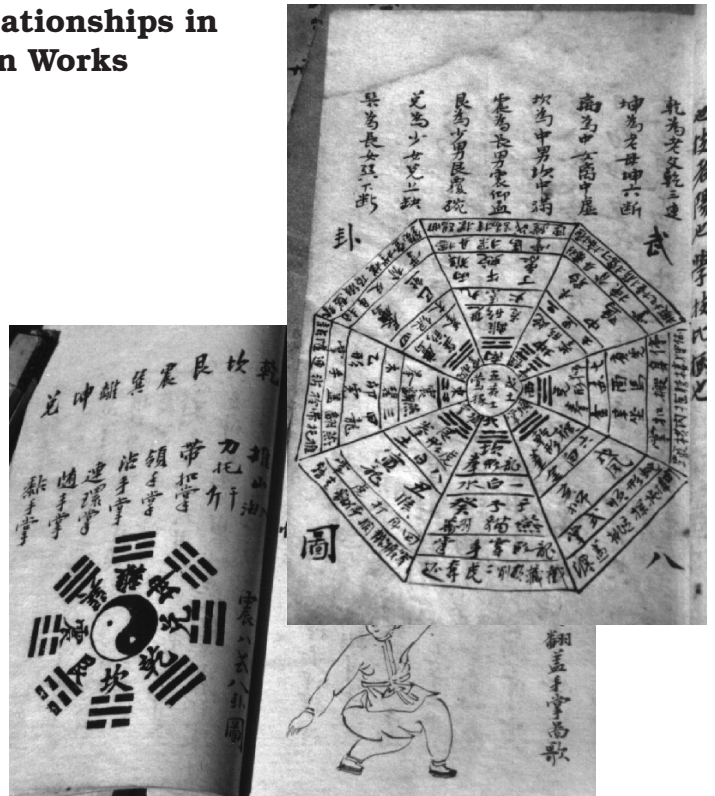
4) If the practitioner uses force which is not appropriate for the technique, either in trying to overpower the opponent, applying force at the wrong time, or applying force at an incorrect angle, then five element theory has been violated because the creative and destructive properties of the five elements are not flowing naturally.

5) If the practitioner's movements are not stable and balance, if one movement or application cannot connect to the next in a fluid, smooth, and even manner, if the practitioner ignores low while striking high, or forgets the left while moving to the right, then the *yin/yang*

Trigram Relationships in Written Works



Liu Xing Han's Personal Notes



Gao Yi Sheng's Ba Gua Book

principle has not be followed.

A few examples of a practitioner not following the philosophical trinity in designing a training program would be as follows:

1) Not considering every possible fighting scenario in practicing the art would violate the combinatorial aspects of the *Ba Gua*. This not only applies to such combinations of high/low, left/right, inside/outside, attack/defense, and long range/short range as was discussed in Park Bok Nam's book *The Fundamentals of Pa Kua Chang*, but also considerations of environment and terrain, such as light/dark, rough/smooth, hilly/flat, or open/confined should be considered when practicing. Additionally, the practitioner considers the type of opponent he or she might be facing. Is the opponent tall/short, heavy/light, left handed/right handed, fast/slow, a puncher or kicker, an inside fighter or outside fighter, a grappler or a boxer, etc. In order to follow the combinatorial theories of the Ba Gua, the practitioner considers all combinations of these *yin/yang* pairs when researching his or her art. For instance, the practitioner may ask himself, "How would I best handle a large, strong, slow grappler on rocky terrain?" And of course the combinations can become more complex. One may be fighting a large, fast opponent who is skilled at using all sixteen of his striking weapons and the fight might take place in a dark, confined environment (like a crowded bar). If all of these scenarios are not addressed in training, the practitioner is violating the *ba gua* combinatorial theory and thus the practice is not complete.

2) If the practitioner does not practice a balanced program of *qi gong* which addresses all of the major *yin* organs and their respective energy states in a balanced manner, the five element system of checks and balances is not being addressed. If the practitioner is concentrating too heavily on any one aspect of training and ignoring others, the five element theory of checks and balances is also being violated. Practicing too much *qi gong*, too much fighting, too much footwork, too much circle walking, too many palm exercises, too much meditation, or too many breathing exercises, at the expense of all of the other aspects of training is not following the principles of the five element theory.

3) If the practitioner does not balance his or her overall training routine between *yang* exercise (fighting, power exercises, etc.) and *yin* exercise (energy building methods of *qi gong* and meditation), then the overall program is not balanced.

In evaluating a student's martial applications or training program, Park will always look for the presence of the principles of the philosophical trinity. Park says that following the principles of the philosophical trinity means that the student is being natural and the training is complete. He believes that these theories are the theories of nature and all things that are natural follow these theories. Ba Gua Zhang is an art which follows natural principles belonging to the earth, the environment, and the human. Because these principles are natural, they can be used universally and adapt



The "Early Heaven" (inner circle) and "Later Heaven" (outer circle) Trigrams as shown in Sun Lu Tang's Ba Gua book

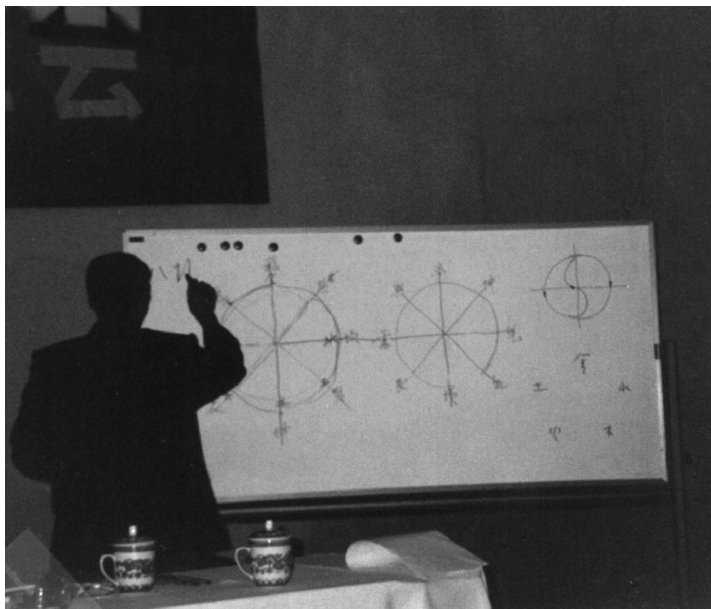
to any given situation.

Some may argue that all of the examples given above are really just common sense principles in all martial arts practice and training. This is true. The importance of the philosophy here is in simply providing a model to follow to insure none of the common sense components of martial arts training and application are forgotten.

Some examples of how other schools of Ba Gua relate the trigrams of the *Yi Jing* to their martial arts practice are as follows:

1) Some schools believe that each of the eight trigrams relate to a specific palm shape. In executing any form movement, the shape of each palm which appears during the movement represents a trigram and thus the two palms combined symbolize the hexagrams of the *Yi Jing* and the changes of the palms symbolize the changing patterns of the hexagrams. In the execution of the movements and applications which relate to this theory, all combinations of eight palms are represented in the forms and/or in the training and thus the student has practiced all possible combinations of the eight "mothers" in the system.

2) In some schools, each of the three lines of the eight trigrams represent a section of the body (lower, middle, and upper) and each section (*gua*) of the form is related to a trigram. Therefore, in each particular *gua*, the student has an idea of how to express the body movements and the energy of that form section. For instance the trigram *Li* indicates a *yang* upper body, *yin* middle body, and *yang* lower body. Therefore in the *Li Gua* of the form, these practitioners will be taught



Zhang Shou Lin presenting a paper on *Yi Jing* philosophy as it relates to Ba Gua Zhang at the 1995 International Ba Gua Zhang Conference in Beijing, September 1995

to be expressive in the upper and lower parts of the body and receptive in the middle section of the body. In transitioning through all eight sections of the form in this manner, the practitioner has studied all possible combinations of the upper, middle, and lower body movements and energies.

3) In some schools, each section of an eight section form is represented by the characteristics of a trigram as it is expressed in an “animal” style. For instance, the lion *gua* relates to the *Jian* trigram (three solid lines) and is totally *yang* in its character, expression, energy and application. Conversely, the unicorn *gua* relates to the *Kun* trigram (three broken lines) and thus is totally receptive and evasive in its martial energy and expression. Each “animal” have their own characteristics based on the trigram meanings and thus in the practice of the entire system, the practitioner has learned all of the various characteristics, energies, and expressions of the entire art. The “eight animal” system will be discussed in greater detail later in this article.

4) In some schools, each trigram relates to a different part of the body or internal organ. Typically, four trigrams will relate to external body parts and four trigrams will relate to internal organs or energies. In executing the movements of the form which corresponds to each trigram, the practitioner feels the energy, movement, and power of the form come from that particular part of the body or internal organ.

5) In some schools each section of their primary eight section form corresponds to a particular trigram. The characteristics and energies of that particular section of the form are related to the characteristics of the trigram to which it corresponds. Out of each section, the form is further divided into eight movements and/or applications which can be practiced separately from

the form in straight line sets. Eight techniques coming out of eight sections of the form make for 64 separate techniques, thus a correspondence to the hexagrams of the *Yi Jing*.

The list above describes only a few of the relationships and correspondences which appear in various schools of Ba Gua Zhang. Because the philosophy is so vast and the relationships of the philosophy to the martial art are many, interpretation is left open to each individual. Regardless of whether or not Dong Hai Chuan related his art to philosophical concepts or they were added later by scholars who studied the art, the fact remains that today the majority of the schools of Ba Gua Zhang utilize Chinese philosophical concepts to research and develop their martial arts in both practice and application. In the next section, I will present a historic perspective regarding how some of the theories of Chinese philosophy have been universally adapted in the development, practice, and application of the martial arts.

The Evolution of Ba Gua Zhang Strategy

As stated above, many schools of Ba Gua Zhang believe that all fighting strategies and applications come from the theory of *yin/yang*, five elements, and *ba gua* - the principles of nature. In general, *yin* and *yang* represent the dynamic interaction of opposites, the five elements represent a system of checks and balances and interactive play between components of a system, and the *ba gua* represents angular, linear, rotational, and cyclical movement, variation, change, and combinatorial theory. Throughout history, almost all aspects of Chinese religion, society, art, and culture have used these models as a philosophical base for their theories, and warfare is no exception.

All of the great military and martial minds in China’s vast history have drawn from the philosophy of *yin/yang*, *ba gua*, and five elements in constructing their theories and strategies of warfare. The relationship between Chinese philosophy and the strategies of war become quite evident when one turns to the classic transmissions of warfare (*Sun Zi’s Art of War* being the most well known) which have guided China’s military development from the Warring States Period through present time.

Throughout a large part of China’s modern history (Tang Dynasty through the Qing Dynasty), all military leaders, in order to earn their military appointment, were required to pass imperial examinations. These examinations were based on the compilation of information contained in seven classic military documents: *Tai Gong’s Secret Teachings*, *The Methods of Si Ma*, *Sun Zi’s Art of War*, *Wu Zu*, *Wei Liao Zu*, *Three Strategies of Huang Shi Gong*, and *Questions and Replies Between Tang Tai Zung and Li Wei Gong*. All of these classics emphasize similar strategies, such as, overcoming one’s opponent through subtle skill instead of brute force and outwitting one’s opponent through

speed, stealth, evasiveness, and flexibility. Even modern day military books in China, like *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, adhere to the same principles and theories that were valid centuries ago. All of these strategies can be, in some way, traced back to the theoretical models of the *yin/yang*, *ba gua*, and five elements.

The bandits and thieves of the day, who were the primary opponents of the Ba Gua practitioners, usually carried light or concealed weapons and employed “dog pack” like tactics in attacking their opponents.

Drawing from the teachings of the classics and the fundamental theories of Chinese philosophy, each generation of military and martial leadership has adapted to the situation at hand. In all varieties of warfare in China, from hand-to-hand, weapon-to-weapon, foot soldier-to-mounted soldier, mounted soldier-to-mounted soldier, combat with armor and shields, chariots, or cavalry; all the way to present day conventional weapons, the specific tactics and weapons of fighting have changed, but the theories and principles of warfare in China have remained the same.

Modern day examples of these ancient theories and strategies being directly applied to warfare were abundant during the Vietnam conflict. In July of 1993, five-tour Vietnam veteran Col. David Hackworth, America's most decorated living veteran, return to Vietnam to interview NVA and VC officers to compare lessons learned from the war. One thing Hackworth discovered, as written in his article “Why We Lost in ‘Nam” published in the December 1993 issue of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, was that the Vietnamese were prepared to adapt to the situation at hand and, using the tactics and strategies of Sun Zi, were able to overcome a far more powerful force. In his article Hackworth states, “I did not find one former VC leader I interviewed who hadn't studied Sun-tzu backwards and forwards. Bay Cao, at 74, could recite complete passages from Sun-tzu's writing.”

Most schools of Ba Gua believe that Ba Gua Zhang is no different then the example given above in its reliance on the ancient strategies and theories of Chinese warfare in its execution. In fact, it could be argued that Ba Gua Zhang adheres to the principles of Chinese philosophy, which formed the foundation for all military thought in China, more than any other combat art. These practitioners believe that Dong Hai Chuan's genius was in taking fighting techniques he knew from his Shaolin based training and modifying what he knew in order to be consistent with the theories of Chinese philosophy. The originator of Ba Gua

Zhang went back to the roots of theory and strategy in inventing his art and in doing so left a true art form; one that is open to variation and change from one practitioner to another and one that is adaptable to an endless variety of situations.

Origins of Ba Gua Zhang Strategy

Ba Gua Zhang is an art based on natural principles, not on individual strengths, techniques or situations, and therefore it can be applied in any situation by any practitioner. An examination of its development shows that it was developed in a specific time and place in Chinese history and many of the techniques that have been passed down to today's practitioners are reflective of that moment in history. Ba Gua Zhang was not originated, nor was it nurtured through its infancy, as an art for soldiers on the battlefield or for boxers in a ring. The art “earned its stripes” in its use as a guerrilla style tactic employed to fight multiple opponents. Therefore, in order to understand some of the primary fighting tactics the Ba Gua Zhang practitioner has historically employed when applying his art, one must look back to the circumstances of its origin.

During the time when this art was becoming popular in China as a very effective combat method, the majority



Li Cun Yi owned his own body guard company and taught Ba Gua to his employees so that they could learn to fight multiple attackers



Dong Hai Chuan taught each of his Ba Gua Zhang students based on their individual strengths, physical size, and martial arts background

of the practitioners utilizing this art were working professionally as body guards, caravan escorts, and residence guards. Ba Gua Zhang instructor Li Cun Yi owned his own bodyguard company and many of his famous students who learned Ba Gua and Xing Yi from him learned while they were employed in his company so they could do their job. The bandits and thieves of the day, who were the primary opponents of the Ba Gua practitioners, usually carried light or concealed weapons and employed “dog pack” like tactics in attacking their opponents. Therefore, those who worked as bodyguards, residence guards, and caravan escorts needed to be able to handle simultaneous attacks from multiple opponents who were armed with weapons.

In order to successfully handle opponents employing these tactics, one needed to be highly mobile, very quick and thorough in application, and very efficient in dealing with more than one attacker at a time. Ba Gua Zhang became famous in this era because its practitioners were able to draw from its underlying theories and adapt perfectly to this situation. The practitioners were highly mobile, lightning fast, observant and aware of all directions, and thus could deal with multiple attackers. Ba Gua’s strategy of

outflanking the opponent was developed ideally for this situation because a practitioner who was faced with two or more attackers could get to the outside and behind one attacker and put that attacker between him and the other attackers. Ba Gua’s use of turning and twisting maneuvers in rapidly changing directions was also ideal for being able to address multiple attackers. Ba Gua’s use of quick and efficient percussive techniques which broke bones or otherwise quickly damaged the opponent in short order also were ideal for churning through one opponent after another. However, this is not all there is to Ba Gua Zhang. Ba Gua means variation, change, and adaptability.

While the tactics and techniques listed above defined Ba Gua at the period of time when it was being used most prevalently as a combat art in a real life or death situation, these tactics and techniques do not strictly define Ba Gua Zhang because there is no way to strictly define an art which is based on principle. The art changes as the situation dictates and it changes to a certain degree with each practitioner who practices the art. This is why Dong Hai Chuan taught each of his students differently and why every Ba Gua instructor has a different interpretation of the art. It is not an art which should be copied exactly from the teacher to his or her students.

Every student is unique and thus every student should be taught to develop his or her Ba Gua based on their own individual strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, each practitioner takes the principles of the art and develops them in a way which is suited for a number of various combat environments. If every student was taught exactly the same and only practiced the art in a well lit, smooth floor martial arts school, the practice would not be following natural principles and would not adapt well to varying circumstances.

In my personal opinion, I believe that the most important concept that has been extracted from the *Yi Jing* and applied to the art of Ba Gua Zhang is the general concept of adaptability, flexibility, and change. These characteristics are most important in learning how to adapt the art to any situation and modify the method to suit any given practitioner. Since these concepts are clearly demonstrated in the most schools of Ba Gua, I will discuss these two topics in more detail below before we move into a discussion of the Eight Mother Palms.

Adapting the Art to Fit the Situation

Although submissive joint locks which control an opponent, rather than break their joints and bones immediately, and grappling techniques which are used to take the opponent to the ground, wrestle with them, and choke them out, are becoming popular today, they are not very effective against multiple attackers or opponents who carry concealed bladed weapons. When fighting multiple attackers, if you take too long dealing with one, or you go to the ground with one, the others will quickly be on your back. Also, if you try to

wrestle with someone who has a concealed knife, you will easily be cut or stabbed.

Because ground grappling and submissive techniques do not work well in the combat situations which the Ba Gua practitioners who developed the art most often found themselves, Ba Gua practitioners have historically not practiced submissive techniques or ground fighting. But it does not mean that Ba Gua does not have these things. Ba Gua is an art based on sound theoretical principles and thus it can address any combat scenario. Practitioners who are taught to understand the principles of Ba Gua can learn to research and apply those principles in any situation.

Ba Gua Zhang strategies in the late 1800's and early 1900's were designed to fight multiple attackers and deal with them quickly and efficiently. The forms and techniques which have been passed down in choreographed sets reflect these strategies. However, we should not think that Ba Gua Zhang is limited to these specific techniques or the multiple attack scenario. It is wrong to think that because Ba Gua Zhang was not practiced as a ground fighting art, that it does not have ground fighting, or because it emphasizes the palm strike, it does not strike with the fist, or because it primarily employs circular footwork, it does not have linear applications. Ba Gua has ground fighting, punching, kicking, joint locking, inside fighting, outside fighting, and everything else that can be effectively employed in a combat environment because Ba Gua principles can be effectively applied to all of these situations. Ba Gua Zhang is an art based on principle, not technique or situation. Because it is based on principle, it is variable, adaptable, and universal. It can be applied in any situation, environment, or scenario.

The Individual Expression of the Art

Ba Gua follows natural principles. The principles of nature dictate that all individuals are graced with their own nature, their own character, their own individuality, and their own uniqueness. In order to follow the principles of nature, each individual follows his or her own individual nature. Daoist teachings invite each individual to discover his or her own nature and live life in accordance with their nature and natural principles. Following the "Way" in Daoism is discovering how one's own nature fits seamlessly into the ever changing ebb and flow of the natural world. Since history indicates that Dong Hai Chuan was a Daoist and developed his art while living at a Daoist temple, it would seem natural that he would teach his art to his students based on the Daoist principles. An examination of what his students learned from him and how it was in turn passed on to their students reveals that he did teach every student in accordance with that student's unique qualities and characteristics.

In teaching his students, Dong Hai Chuan took into account each student's martial arts background, character, size, aptitude, ability, personality, age, and physical condition. Because he taught each student differently, based on that student's unique qualities,

every lineage of Ba Gua Zhang has its own flavor. Even fundamental components of the art, such as the "eight mother palms," are executed differently in every lineage. In turn, Dong's students and grandstudents all approached the transmission of their art as Dong did. They taught each student in a way that was unique to that student. Unfortunately, in recent years, instructors have begun to "standardize" Ba Gua forms and teach the same choreographed form routines and fighting applications to all of their students, regardless of the student's size, aptitude, or character. This severely limits the art and the individual student's progress in the art.

The first and foremost principle of Ba Gua Zhang is adaptability and change and thus those practitioner who try to define Ba Gua Zhang and rigidly structure its practice and application are moving away from the art. Art is something that is individually expressed and is adaptable. Providing too rigid a structure to an art and judging it based on that structure is stifling the growth of the art and the progress of those who practice it. In this Journal I have tried to present all the various ways that individuals might validly practice components of this system, such as the circle walk (see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 6) or the single palm change (see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 5, Number 5) in order to demonstrate that there are many acceptable variations on this theme of Ba Gua Zhang. Yet, there are still many practitioner's out there who point at another's Ba Gua and say, "That is not right!"

By now you might be asking yourself, "What does all of that have to do with the Eight Mother Palms? Isn't this article supposed to be about the Eight Mother Palms?" You are right, and we are about to get to the Eight Mother Palms. However, I felt that it was first necessary to discuss the topics that were addressed above for several reasons. These reasons are as follows:

1) Some schools of Ba Gua utilize the practice of the Eight Mother Palms strictly as a physical foundation for the practice of forms and applications which follow. These schools attach no philosophical connection with the individual palms and do not relate them in any way to the eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing*. It does not mean that these schools do not believe in any type of philosophical connection between the martial art and the philosophy, it just means that they believe that relating each of the mother palms to one of the eight trigrams and then trying to make some correspondence between the nature of the trigram in philosophy with the practice of that particular palm is going overboard. They believe that the philosophical connections are much simpler and more general. It does not mean that they are "wrong."

2) There are many schools of Ba Gua who define the Eight Mother Palms as eight different static upper body positions held while walking the circle. In these schools, the entire body posture is the "palm." Although all of these schools practice these eight palms with



Cheng You Xin's son, Cheng De Liang, holds the "Embracing Moon At Chest" posture

the same developmental and theoretical concepts in mind, they do not all use the same eight postures. One school is not right and the others wrong. There is no such thing as the "original" eight palms or the "orthodox" eight palms.

In practicing the Eight Mother Palms, whether standing still, or walking the circle as a *qi* building exercise, or in using them in fighting applications, different postures are suited to different individuals. A smart teacher will not teach the same eight postures held in the same exact way to every student because every student is different in size, shape, character, aptitude, age, and health condition. Therefore, it is natural that different schools and systems of Ba Gua developed different posturing.

3) Some schools define the eight mother palms as the exact palm shape (from the forearm down to the fingers), not a body position or posture (again, among the schools that do this, the eight palms are not always the same). This group tends to get more detailed about the relationships between the Eight Mother Palms and the eight trigrams and builds combinations of these

eight palm shapes to form the 64 hexagrams of the *Yi Jing*. While all schools are not prone to do this, it is certainly a valid way at approaching the *Yi Jing* philosophy as it relates to the martial art practice and application.

The Eight Mother Palms

Because there are several different approaches to the theory and the practice of the Eight Mother Palms, I will divide the remainder of our Eight Mother Palm presentation into several sections. In the remainder of this article, I will describe the Eight Mother Palms as eight different upper body positions that are first practiced as the student holds the posture while standing still or walking the circle. I will then describe how these eight palms lead to the practice of more complex forms, applications, and theoretical concepts. In the article which follows this one, Ba Gua Zhang instructor Gary Stier will describe how the Eight Mother Palms are approached in his system of Ba Gua.

In *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 5, Number 5, I described Ba Gua's Eight Mother Palms as one of the "four pillars" of Ba Gua training (the other pillars being the circle walk practice, the single palm change, and the double palm change). In this context I was defining the Eight Mother Palms as being the foundational static upper body postures which are held while the practitioner is practicing the basic circle walk. These postures are designed to train certain structural alignments and energetic connections while the practitioner is walking the circle. The upper body is held static while the lower body is continuously moving. In the practice of holding the eight mother palms, the practitioner trains structural strengths, internal body connections, internal/external body integration and harmony, development and awareness of muscle groups not usually under conscious control, tendon strength and conditioning, and joint opening and suppleness. These components are trained in each of the eight holding postures.

Once the student has gained these physical and mental connections in the practice of the holding postures and the changes which link the postures together, he or she can then advance and learn how to utilize the alignments and connections that were forged during the basic practice into more complex movements and changes. The reason these postures are referred to as the "eight mother" palms ("palms" in this sense is referring to the energy of the whole body and alignment of the whole body) is because they are designed to build the physical and energetic foundation for all of the higher level training.

The Eight Holding Postures

In most systems of Ba Gua Zhang, one of the first things the new student will learn is the eight holding postures. These are sometimes called the "eight mother

palms,” the “*qi gong* palms,” the “*nei gong*” palms, or the “eight forms.” Many systems will first have the students hold these postures during basic stance training drills where the student simply stands still while holding the posture. In some systems the same leg stance is held as the practitioner holds each of the different upper body postures for a certain length of time before transitioning to the next. In other schools, the leg stance changes along with the upper body posture. However, in almost all systems of Ba Gua, this static posture holding is simply a prelude to the circle walk practice executed while holding these postures.

While many schools begin the training with static posture holding, other schools start immediately with the next stage of training. This stage requires that the student hold the static upper body posture while executing the basic circle walk practice. In the Liang Zhen Pu system of Ba Gua Zhang as taught by Li Zi Ming, this practice is called *ding shi* eight palms (定式八掌) or *nei gong* circle walking. In an interview conducted with Li Zi Ming’s student Zhao Da Yuan, Zhao explains that while this practice in Ba Gua is considered to be similar to the “standing post” practice trained in Shaolin and Xing Yi Quan, there is one important difference - in Ba Gua the practitioner is moving. Zhao states that since Shaolin training has had a heavy Buddhist influence, they pull their spirit in and concentrate inward during their standing meditation. Ba Gua Zhang has had a Daoist influence in its circle walking practice and since the Daoists are concerned with becoming “one with Heaven and Earth” they do not like to stand in place and focus inward as in the Buddhist practice.

Zhao says that the Daoists believe that if you practice meditation while you are moving, you can better blend with the patterns of nature and absorb the *qi* of Heaven and Earth. Zhao continues by saying that nothing in nature stands still, everything is always changing and thus if the practitioner is moving while practicing meditation, it is more natural. He states that this does not mean static meditation is bad, he simply points out that since the “ten thousand things” in nature don’t stand still, it is more natural to move.

Zhao explains more about the practice by saying that when the practitioner is holding a static posture, but continues to move around the circle, there is both “stillness in movement” and “movement in stillness.” The internal leads the external and the external matches the internal. The external trains the form, and the internal trains the *Yi* (intention) and the *qi*. When walking the circle holding static postures, the internal and external are trained together, however, the internal leads the external. In Shaolin training the internal and external are often times trained separately. The internal is trained during sitting and standing meditation and the external is trained during forms practice. Zhao says that this is not natural. He believes that the Daoist method of training the internal and external together, with a focus on the internal, is more

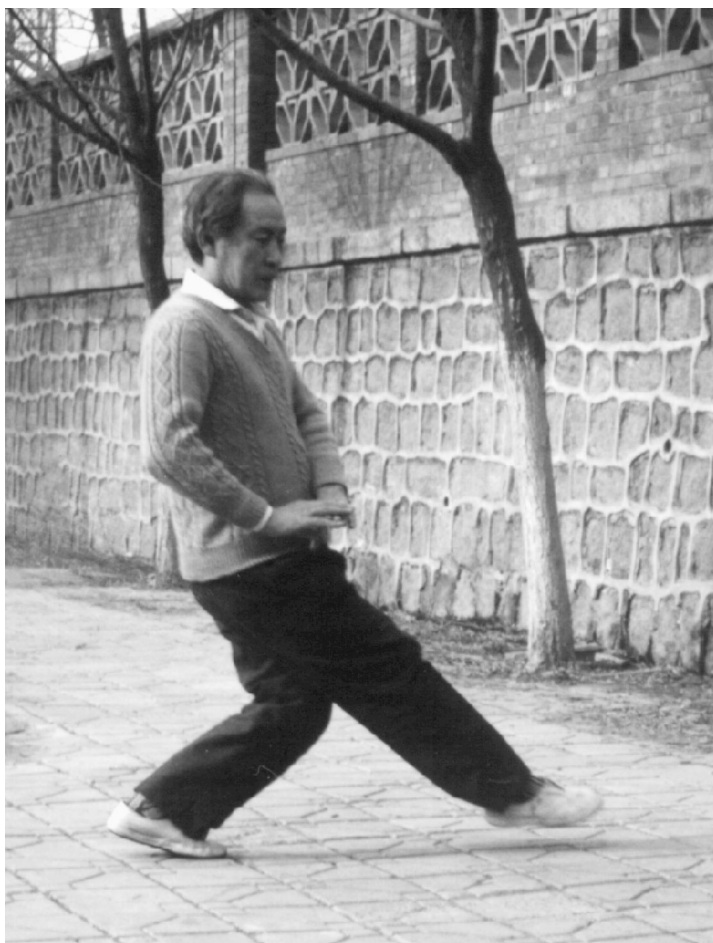
natural and thus more advantageous.

Zhao echoes the teachings of many schools of Ba Gua Zhang in his belief that the key element of this practice, and that which makes it “internal,” is the link between the mind and the body. The circle walk training which is practiced while holding the static postures of the Eight Mother Palms has many physical benefits in terms of the body alignments and connections which are forged, however, the integration of mind and body which occurs during this practice a key element of this training. In fact, there are a few schools of Ba Gua who do not teach this aspect of the training until the student is more advanced because they believe beginners do not have the mental discipline required to properly focus the intention. In these schools basic exercises and form routines are taught to the beginners and the eight holding palms are only taught after the student exhibits an ability to maintain mental focus.

Zhao Da Yuan says that when the average person



Sun Xi Kun, Cheng You Long's student, holds the "Double Embracing Palm" posture



Sun Zhi Jun practicing the first of his eight holding postures, "downward sinking" palm

contracts a muscle, 45 to 50 percent of the muscle fiber in that muscle fire in the performance of that task. A trained athlete, or a person who repetitively works a set of muscles performing a certain task, may contract about 70 percent of the muscle fiber in a given muscle for a given purpose. Zhao's theory is that if the practitioner holds a static posture, or moves slowly as in Tai Ji, and cultivates a complete mind/body connection in association with that posture or movement, he will be able to develop the ability to get more muscle fiber to contract at the same time for the same purpose. He states that if the practitioner trains the Yi (intention) and has a highly refined physical awareness, the mind can better focus and control the body's function.

In China, the term used to describe a strength which is developed over a period of repetitious practice is called *gong li* (功力). Some teachers in China use the following story to explain *gong li*. There was a street merchant in Beijing who made and sold fried dough twists from a cart on the street corner. All day, day in and day out, the merchant took a long roll of bread dough, folded it in half and twisted the two halves together (as if wringing out a towel) to make a dough twist. He would then fry them up and sell them to travelers on the street.

One day a thief stole a woman's money across the street from the dough twist vendor's stand. In his

escape, the thief ran past the vendor. As the thief went by, the vendor grabbed his wrist and applied a twisting motion. With the twisting of his arm, the thief was thrown onto the ground and the money fell. The vendor picked up the money and handed it to the woman from whom it was taken. The thief knelt before the vendor and asked what style of martial arts he had practiced to obtain such skill. The vendor answered that all he had ever practice was making fried dough twists.

The moral of the story is that after having spent years executing the wringing motion required to twist his bread dough, the man had acquired *gong li* in the execution of this action. He was strong enough to throw the thief to the ground because in executing this simple action thousands of times, he had acquired natural strength in its execution. The same theory applies to internal martial arts practice. It is better to have executed many repetitions than to have struggled with a few repetitions. When teachers tell their students to hold a certain posture and walk the circle for one hour, the logic of some students is to say, "But wouldn't it be more efficient if I walked for a half hour and held five pound weights in each hand." The answer is no. The benefits are not the same. In walking for the longer period of time without weights, the mind/body connection is formed to a greater degree and the practice is more natural.

Many of the ideas relating the to the physical benefits one gains in executing the circle walk while holding the Eight Mother Palms were explained in *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 6, in the circle walking article, so I will not repeat them here. Suffice to say that in the holding of the eight static posture while walking the circle the practitioner will forge important muscular, tendeno-muscular, energetic, nervous system, and mind/body alignments and connections in the body.

The Mother Palms As Static Whole Body Postures

In this section of the article we will describe the eight mother palms as they are practiced in most of the schools of Ba Gua Zhang. Most schools view the "palms" as whole body static postures which are held to forge certain energetic connections, body alignments, and muscular/tendon development. In these schools, after the student gains the proper strengths, alignments, and connections in practicing the "mother palms," he then learns how to change between one posture and the next in a variety of different ways in order to learn how to utilize these alignments in fighting or for health building and maintenance.

Among schools that practice the eight mother palms as static upper body postures, there are two approaches to this method. These two approaches, which I will call the "Eight Energies" and the "Eight Animals" schools are described below.

The Eight Energies

I call this school of thought the "eight energies" school because the practice of their eight mother palms is designed to develop eight progressive energy stages



First Gua



Second Gua



Third Gua



Fourth Gua



Fifth Gua



Sixth Gua



Seventh Gua



Eighth Gua

Sun Zhi Jun demonstrating his eight holding postures while walking the circle.

in the body during the practice. Once the student has developed these levels of energy distribution and balance in the body through repetitive practice of these eight mother palms, he or she is then ready to utilize, change, and develop these energies in a variety of different ways by practicing the forms and drills which are taught after the foundation of the mother palms has been built.

One modern day practitioner from this school is Sun Zhi Jun (孫志君) of Beijing, China (see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 4). Sun Zhi Jun grew up in Cheng Ting Hua's home village and studied with Cheng Ting Hua's student Liu Zi Yang (劉子揚), Cheng Dian Hua's (程殿華) son, Cheng You Sheng (程有生), and Cheng Ting Hua's son Cheng You Xin (程有信). Sun said that when he practiced in the Cheng village, practice of the "eight mother palms" was emphasized for the first three years of training. (One interesting note is that Sun Zhi Jun actually calls his eight holding postures the "old eight palms" and his first full Ba Gua form the "eight mother" palms. This is exactly opposite of most Ba Gua schools. However, no matter what the name, the concepts are the same.)

Although we will be exploring Sun's postures here, many other schools of Ba Gua practice postures which are almost identical, including Liang Zhen Pu stylists,

and other Cheng Ting Hua stylists including Cheng You Long, Cheng You Xin, Gao Yi Sheng and their descendants.

The First Gua, "Downward Sinking" Palm: The first of Sun's postures, the "downward sinking" palm, is such that the hands are held down by the lower *dan tian* (丹田) as the practitioner is walking the circle. The palms are facing downward and the mental image is one of pushing the energy downward. Sun says that this first posture is used to help the student bring the body's energy to the lower *dan tian*. The student concentrates on walking the circle while sinking the body's energy down. The arms being held in a low position near the *dan tian* helps to facilitate this energy movement in the body. Practitioners from the Liang Zhen Pu (梁振蒲) system, the Gao Yi Sheng (高義盛) system, and the Sun Xi Kun (孫錫堃) system also utilize this holding posture.

The Second Gua, "Double Lifting" Palm: After the student has developed the ability to sink the body's energy to the lower *dan tian* through the practice of circle walking while holding the "downward sinking" palm, and has circumnavigated the circle many times in both directions, he or she will then transition to the



Liang Zhen Pu stylist Zhang Hua Sen holding the "Yin and Yang Turning Palms" Posture

second posture, the "double lifting" palm. This posture is exactly like the "dragon" posture from the eight animals school. Sun explains that after the energy has rooted itself in the lower *dan tian* with the first walking posture, the student then brings both arms up and out to the sides of the body after executing the change of directions. This posture helps connect the energy in the lower *dan tian* with the energy in the middle *dan tian*, which is located in the area of the solar plexus. Again, it is the position of the arms combined with the walking of the circle which directs the energy to the proper place in the body. Sun explains that this second posture not only brings the energy from the lower *dan tian* to the middle *dan tian*, it also helps to spread the energy out to both palms from the middle *dan tian* in a balanced manner.

In practicing this second posture the student should focus on the palms as if he or she was holding something in the palms. The student feels the energy come out from the center of the chest and fill the palms as if the palms have small pools of water forming in them and the student does not want to drop the water. This image also helps place the intention in the proper place while holding this posture.

The Third Gua, "Closing Embracing" Palm: After the student feels a full and balanced flow of energy, which has been rooted in the lower *dan tian* during the execution of the first walking posture and then brought up to fill the middle *tan tian*, arms, and palms during the second walking posture, the student will then change to the third walking posture. In the third walking posture, "closing embracing" palm, the student places one hand up just about eye height with the palm facing up while the other palm is placed up above the head with the palm facing down. This posture is very similar to the "lion" posture in the eight animal style (see photo on page 20).

This posture takes the energy that has been brought to the middle *dan tian* in the last walking posture and allows it to flow up to the upper *dan tian* located under the crown of the head and behind the middle of the eyebrows. The practitioner will imagine that the body's energy is coming up through the arms and connecting in a circular loop following the posture of the arms. The arm posture facilitates a concentrated flow of the energy to the crown of the head. In some schools the basic posture is the same, however, the upper palm is turned to face upwards (see the photo of Sha Guo Cheng on the cover of this issue).

The first three postures of the eight have now filled the body from head to toe with energy starting by a focus on the lower *dan tian* and lower abdomen moving down to the feet and then moving to the middle *dan tian* and chest area moving out to the arms, and then moving from up to the upper *dan tian* and the crown of the head. These three postures have formed a foundation of full energy in the body. The next five postures will now work to distribute the energy in the body in a variety of different ways. Sun says that the remaining five palms develop different types of "power."

The Fourth Gua, "Seven Star Turning" Palm: The next two postures focus back on the energy in the middle of the body, one opening up the energy of the back and the other opening up the energy of the chest. You can see that the next posture, the "seven star turning palm," (which is also known as "double embracing palms,") as shown by Sun Zhi Jun in the sequence on the previous page and by Sun Xi Kun in the photograph on page 15, will tend to open up the back while hollowing the chest. This helps to open up the energy in the back and allow that energy to follow the posture into the two palms. The practitioner's intention is place on the energy in the palms as if the palms are embracing a ball. In the eight animal school, the "monkey offers fruit" posture of the monkey form is almost identical to this posture. In executing this posture, some schools will hold the palms up higher than others.

The Fifth Gua, "Double Crushing" Palms: The fifth posture in this sequence is the "double crushing palms" posture, (also known as the "embracing moon

at chest" posture). While the previous posture held the back open and the chest closed, this posture opens up the energy in the chest by pushing the palms away from the body, turning the elbows outward and having the chest very rounded. This posture can be seen in photo 5 of the sequence on the previous page, or as executed by Cheng De Liang on page 14. Here the focus is on relaxing the shoulders, rounding the chest and pushing out with the palms. The image "double crushing palms," which can also be translated as "double crashing palms" gives the practitioner the image of pushing away from the body in a manner that would crash through something. The previous two palms are practiced by students of the Liang Zhen Pu system, the Gao Yi Sheng system, and the Sun Xi Kun system.

The Sixth Gua, "Yin and Yang Turning" Palms:









While the first five of these postures remain fairly consistent among the school who practice what I have been referring to as the "eight energies" system of holding postures, the next two will vary from school to school. The next palm, "Yin and Yang turning palms," is practiced by Cheng You Xin's students as having the upper arm rounded and the palm facing away from the body while the lower palm is held behind the back with the palm pushing down and away from the body. The picture of Sun Zhi Jun on the previous page is not very good. A better representation of this posture is shown at left by Liang Zhen Pu stylist Zhang Hua Sen (張華森). In the Gao Yi Sheng system, the first five postures are identical to those we have presented thus far, however, their sixth posture is exactly like the fifth except that the palms are facing in towards the body instead of away from the body.

The Seventh Palm, "Uniting the Internal" Palm:

The seventh palm as executed by Sun Zhi Jun is different from almost all the other systems who have similar postures to all of the other seven executed by Sun. Most of the other systems utilize a palm here called "Upper and Lower Standing Palms" as demonstrated by Sun Xi Kun on the cover of this issue. Sun Zhi Jun holds the upper hand out away from the body in front of the chest with the palm facing down and the cutting edge of the palm (pinky edge) facing forward. The lower palm is held at about *dan tian* height with the palm facing upward and the thumb side facing forward.

With the exception of the Gao Yi Sheng system, the practitioners from the "eight energies" schools execute the sixth and seventh palms so that one palm is high and the other palm is low, or one palm is in front of the body and one palm is behind the body. In executing these posture the practitioner is training the body's energy to separate between high and low and front and back while still remaining full and complete.

The Eighth Gua, "Pushing Turning" Palm: All systems of this method end the eight mother palms practice with the execution of the standard Ba Gua

	Qian Gua	Lion
	Kun Gua	Unicorn*
	Kan Gua	Snake
	Li Gua	Swallow*
	Zhen Gua	Dragon
	Gen Gua	Bear
	Xun Gua	Phoenix
	Dui Gua	Monkey

The Eight Trigram corresponding to the Eight Animals

*"Unicorn" is not always the name used here, however, all schools who utilize the eight animal names use the Chinese name of some mythical animal in relation to the Kun Gua. "Swallow" is sometimes also called "Sparrowhawk" or "Chicken."

Zhang guard stance posture as shown in photo 8 on the previous page and as shown as practiced by many different masters on pages 16 and 17 of *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 6. This posture finishes the eight postures which began with bringing energy to the lower *dan tian* and legs, then to the middle *dan tian* and arms, then to the upper *dan tian* and crown of the head, then the back was opened and the chest hollowed, then the chest was rounded and the energy in chest opened up, next there were two postures which separated the body's energy between high and low and/or backward and forward and finally, the Ba Gua guard posture was practiced as a posture which ties all of the energies and strengths of the previous postures together.

In transitioning through all eight of these postures and learning how to become aware of the physical connections of the postures and energetic movements in the body that are associated with the postures, the student has built a strong foundation. From here the student will be taught more complex forms and changes, however, these forms and changes will all have a root in the basic eight holding postures.

You may have noticed that while I was describing these holding postures I made no mention of eight trigram correlation. This is because the practitioners of the "eight energy" method of holding postures do not usually make any connections between these postures and the specific eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing*. Sun Zhi Jun says that the practice of Ba Gua Zhang has no direct relationship with each individual trigram



Lion



Unicorn



Snake



Swallow



Dragon



Bear



Phoenix



Monkey

The Eight Animal Postures of Park Bok Nam's School

of the *Yi Jing*. He believes that drawing such direct correspondences is an over complication of the system. He says that the reason the art is called "Ba Gua" and is based on the *Yi Jing* is simply because in practicing the art the practitioner should understand the underlying theory of "continuous change without end" which is present in the *Yi Jing*.

The Eight Animal Theory

Next we will address the eight animal school of Ba Gua holding postures. By "eight animal" school we are simply referring to those practitioners who have given animal names to their eight holding postures and have corresponding eight trigram relationships between those animals and the eight trigrams of the *Yi Jing*. There are numerous schools who have these relationships and it is difficult to find out how these "animal" names originated. If it were only one system or one lineage who utilized these names, it might be easy to trace their origins, however, there are several

diverse systems who use this method.

At first glance it appears that since most of the "eight energies" schools have a connection to the Cheng Ting Hua system of Ba Gua that Cheng's school did not have the "eight animals." However, Sun Lu Tang used the eight animal and eight trigram correspondences and he was a student of Cheng Ting Hua. Also, Liu Xing Han and his group of "Nine Palace" Ba Gua practitioners utilize the eight animals and they are also from the Cheng Ting Hua lineage. Additionally, various schools within the Yin Fu lineage also utilize the eight animals and the eight trigram correspondences. The most surprising part of all is that every system that utilizes the eight animals uses the same eight animal names and the relationships between the animals and the eight trigrams are all the same. These relationships are shown in the illustration on the previous page.

In principle, the eight animal holding postures serve the same purpose as the postures held in the other schools of Ba Gua. In connecting the postures to

animals and trigrams, the eight animals schools have a group of characteristics which they can relate to the given postures of the form. The energies of the form postures and changes are related to these characteristics. As the practitioner learns more complex changing movements between the animal postures and learns to connect these animal postures to other movements of the system, the characteristics are expressed in the movements. In Park Bok Nam's system of Ba Gua, the student will eventually learn how to execute changes from one animal posture to all other animal postures. In other words, when the students first learns the animal holding postures they will learn them in a specific sequence, lion changing to unicorn, changing to snake, changing to swallow, changing to dragon, changing to bear, changing to phoenix, changing to monkey. Later the student will learn how to execute changes from lion to snake, lion to swallow, lion to dragon, etc. Eventually the student will have learned 64 different ways to change between the eight holding postures.

Some of the trigram and animal posture correspondences that are used in the eight animal system are explained by Sun Lu Tang in his book as follows¹:

Qian/Lion: Qian is the form of Heaven. Its nature is Yang. It has the qualities of being strict, dignified, ardent, fiery, virtuous, and heroic. Its nature is that of bravery and heroism. It can eat animals like tigers and leopards. It has the awesome power of shaking its fur.

Kun/Unicorn: Kun is the form of the Earth. Kun is flowing. Its nature is Yin. The Unicorn is a benevolent animal. It has the skill of a flying body, transforming unfathomably. It has the skill of a flowing posture and a returning body that spins and revolves.

Kan/Snake: Kan is the form of Water. The Kan form is that of the center being full. Yang falls into the center of Yin. The Snake is very poisonous. Its nature is very clever and nimble. It is very active. It has the ability to part grass. In this form the outside is soft and flowing and the inside is hard and strong. This form has the *dan tian* full of *qi*. Inside and outside are like water, curving and flowing. There are no cracks that it cannot enter.

Li/Sparrowhawk: Li is the shape of Fire. Li is elegance. Yin elegance is in the center of Yang. Yin borrows from Yang and creates understanding. The Sparrowhawk has the quickness to enter the forest and the skill to overturn its body. In the fighting form, there is the method of hitting points with slicing and cutting. It also has the ability to enter the cave. In this form, the outside is hard and firm, the inside is soft and flowing. The shape has the heart's center being empty.

Zhen/Dragon: Zhen is the form of Thunder. Zhen

is movement. The first Yang is master and creates growth. It has the method of searching bones, the skill of unfathomable transformation, and the form of flying and leaping. The form has the outside being still and the inside moving.

Gan Gua/Bear: Gan is the form of the mountains. Gan means stop. The last Yang line is the master of stillness. The Bear's nature is very dull and obtuse. This thing is very awesome and dignified. It has the strength to hold its head upright. In fighting, it has the bravery to strike with the body, the ability to raise branches, and the method of shaking and searching. The form is hard and strong on top, with the middle and lower being soft and flowing. It is the form of stillness.

Sun/Phoenix: Sun is the form of Wind. Sun is entering. The first Yin is the master of advancing in secret. The Phoenix has the skill to cool its wings. In fighting there is the form of nodding the head and the method of clasping someone under the arm. In this form the upper is hard and strong and the lower is soft and flowing. This is the form of the hurricane.

Dui/Monkey: Dui is the form of the Marsh. Embracing Palms is the fighting form. The final Yin is the master of dissolving. The Monkey has very clever skill. It has method of contracting strength and the skill to leap up mountains. This form has the upper soft and flowing with the middle and bottom hard and strong. It has a contracted short form.

The schools who utilize the animal styles will not all use the exact same postures. On the previous page we present the eight animal postures used in Park Bok Nam's school. The Lion Posture, Dragon Posture, and Monkey Posture are pretty much the same in every system, there are only some slight variations. Additionally, you will notice that these three postures also appear in the "eight energies" schools as shown on the page 17. The only exception is Liu Xing Han's school where the Lion posture is similar to that shown by Sun Zhi Jun on page 17 in photo 7. The only difference between this posture and Liu's is that Liu holds the upper palm and lower palm along the same vertical line instead of extending the upper palm out and keeping the lower palm in close to the body. Another slight variation, as mentioned previously, is that some schools hold the upper hand turned upward in the Lion Posture.

Park's Unicorn posture is exactly like Sun Lu Tang's Unicorn. It is also very similar to the Unicorn posture of Yin Fu's student Men Bao Zhen (門寶珍) - as shown by Xie Pei Qi (解佩啓) on page 19 of *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 1) except for Men kept the lower palm facing upward instead of downward. Park's snake is exactly like Sun Lu Tang's. His Phoenix is different from Sun's, but it is exactly the same as Liu Xing Han's Phoenix.

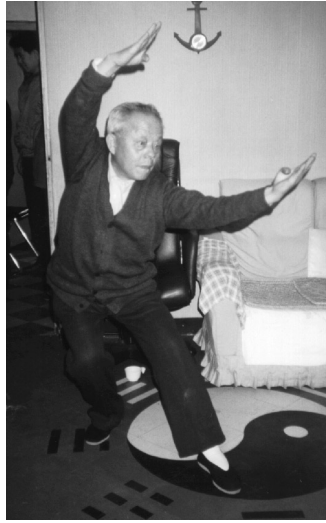
Park's Bear is different than Sun Lu Tang's. However, it seems that all of the animal schools have a



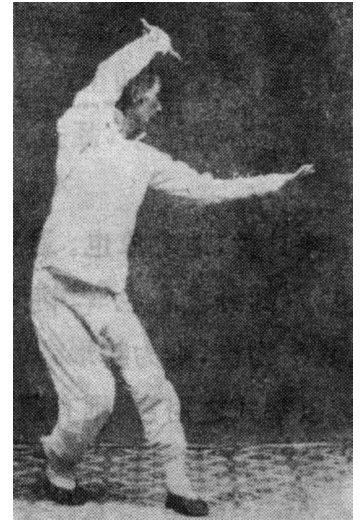
Park Bok Nam



He Jin Han



Xie Pei Qi



Sun Lu Tang

**Several Different Practitioners holding the "Lion" or "Qian Gua" Posture
(also see Sha Guo Cheng on the cover)**

different Bear posture. Men Bao Zhen's Bear and Liu Xing Han's Bear are exactly the same as Sun Zhi Jun's sixth posture (which is also demonstrated by Zhang Hua Sen on the page 18). All the schools versions of the Swallow (also called Chicken or Sparrowhawk) also differ. Men Bao Zhen's chicken is identical to the "Embracing the Moon" posture of the "eight energies" school as shown in photo five on page 17 and in the photo of Cheng De Liang on page 14.

The point I am making here is that although everyone might not have the exact same holding postures or call them by the exact same names, all schools of Ba Gua have holding postures that are very similar. The reason for the differences? As explained previously, each generation of Ba Gua Zhang teachers have taught their student's based on each student's individual needs. These holding postures are each designed to move energy in the body in a specific manner for a specific purpose. They are also designed to develop certain physical strengths and internal body connections. Since each student is an individual and has different needs in terms of physical and energetic development, each student might not be taught the exact same postures.

Where did the Animals Come From?

Some Ba Gua scholars have theorized that the eight animal names were given to the various mother postures in these systems by instructors who had backgrounds in either Shaolin or Xing Yi. This makes sense since the Shaolin and Xing Yi schools already had various animal correspondences to their moves, however, if that is the case, how is it that all of the schools of Ba Gua came up with the same animal names? One might think that since Sun Lu Tang learned Xing Yi before he learned Ba Gua, he developed the correspondences and everyone copied them from

Sun Lu Tang's book. However, there are some "eight animal" systems, like the "Nine Palace" system, which pre-dated Sun Lu Tang's study of Ba Gua with Cheng Ting Hua. Liu Xing Han's teacher, Liu Bin, was senior to Sun Lu Tang. Then the next logical guess is that Sun Lu Tang got the idea from his friend and senior Liu Bin (劉斌). However, Liu Bin never studied Xing Yi or Shaolin, so where did he get the animals from? Did he get them from his teacher Cheng Ting Hua? If so, then why didn't Cheng Ting Hua's brother or his two sons teach the animal systems? Also, Men Bao Zhen's student Xie Pei Qi says that Men Bao Zhen studied these animals from Yin Fu. One might then guess that Yin Fu made the animal correspondences, after all he was a Shaolin practitioner and some of his other descendents also use these animal connections. However, Yin Fu's son, Yin Yu Zhang (尹玉章), did not teach animals. So where does that leave us?

In my mind, the reason there is so much variation among some schools of the same lineage goes back once again to the fact that all Ba Gua teachers teach their student's differently based on their individual needs. Additionally, because Ba Gua is an art of principle and not choreography, each teacher is free to develop his or her system as long as it adheres to the basic underlying principles. Some see the degree of diversity between the various schools of Ba Gua as some sort of black mark against the art. These are the "sheep heads" of the world who think all martial art should be practiced exactly as the teacher has shown. They do not try and think for themselves and discover what will work best for them, they rely on the teacher for everything. I think that it is exactly the opposite. I think that the diversity, variety, adaptability and originality in Ba Gua is its strength.

Note 1: The excerpts from Sun Lu Tang's book were taken from Joseph Crandall's translation.

The Eight Trigram Palms of Shen Men Tao

by Gary Stier

Gary Stier and his system of Shen Men Tao Ba Gua Zhang was featured in the Pa Kua Chang Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 4. In this article Gary explains how his system views the eight mother palms.

The Eight Trigram Palms of the Shen Men Tao System, founded by Dr. Lei Wing-wah in the late 1940's, are externally simple in their form and structure, yet internally profound in their energy dynamics. Dr. Lei taught that the logical development of the Ba Gua art gradually progressed over time from simple ideas and forms to more complex ones. With this thought in mind, the foundation of the Shen Men Tao practice method is a unified physical, mental, and spiritual expression of the primary eight trigrams, or *ba gua*, of the Book of Changes, the *Yi Jing*.

It makes sense that an art named after these eight trigrams must have been greatly influenced by the philosophical ideas they represent, and the physical attributes associated with them. By deliberately incorporating such connections in the form routines, the dynamic energy potential of the art flows with unbroken continuity through a three fold process of inner alchemy to outer expression. Beginning with meditation on the original spiritual revelations inherent in the eight trigrams, the mind is then able to formulate an inner relationship with the intended meaning of the trigrams and, lastly, unite the metaphysical process of spirit and mind with the physical postures of the body. The Shen Men Tao formula describing this unfoldment as follows: "Spirit forms the intention; the intention directs the energy; the energy shapes the form; the form reflects the Spirit. This completes one cycle from Spirit to Spirit, Eternity to Eternity. All things are essentially One in origin!"

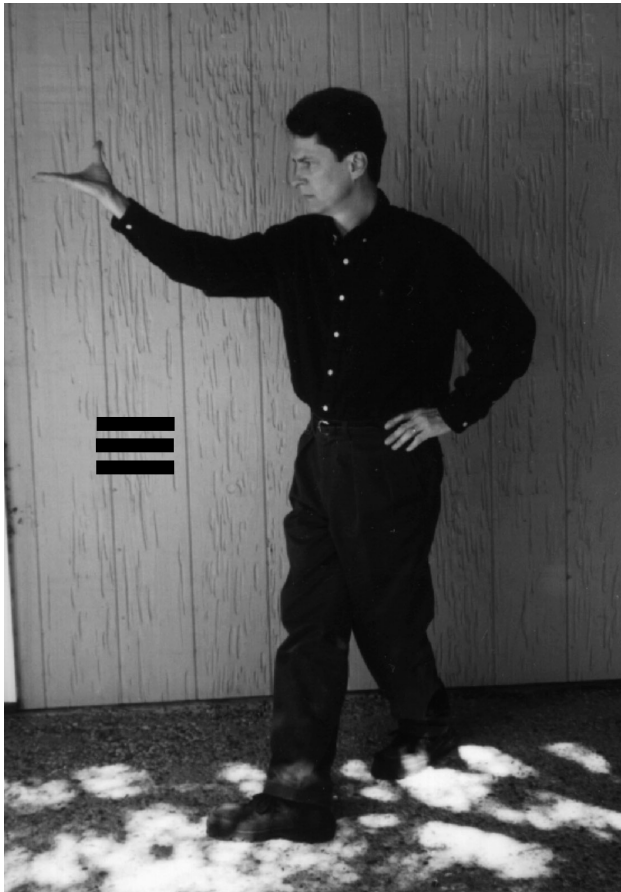
As a result of this process, the Shen Men Tao method teaches a single and unique palm shape or form as representative of each of the eight trigrams. A specific pattern of transitional movement leads the arm and hand into each of these palm shapes. As a group, the Eight Trigram Palms are sometimes referred to as the Mother Forms, or the Mother Palms, since each palm may be combined with any one of the other palms, 8X8, to produce the 64 Hexagram Palms, i.e. 64 uniquely different two handed forms or postures. Using these trigram and hexagram forms as a basic reference tool, any single or double handed posture from any sequence of Ba Gua exercises may be related to the *Yi Jing* as a type of moving Daoism. From this perspective, most of the tactical palm change postures presented as the Mother Palms by other styles or systems of Ba Gua are in fact two handed postures

which are more logically representative of hexagrams rather than trigrams. If a two handed form posture is associated with each trigram, then an immediate problem arises when associating postures with hexagrams since we don't have four arms and four hands, making such associations difficult to logically justify!

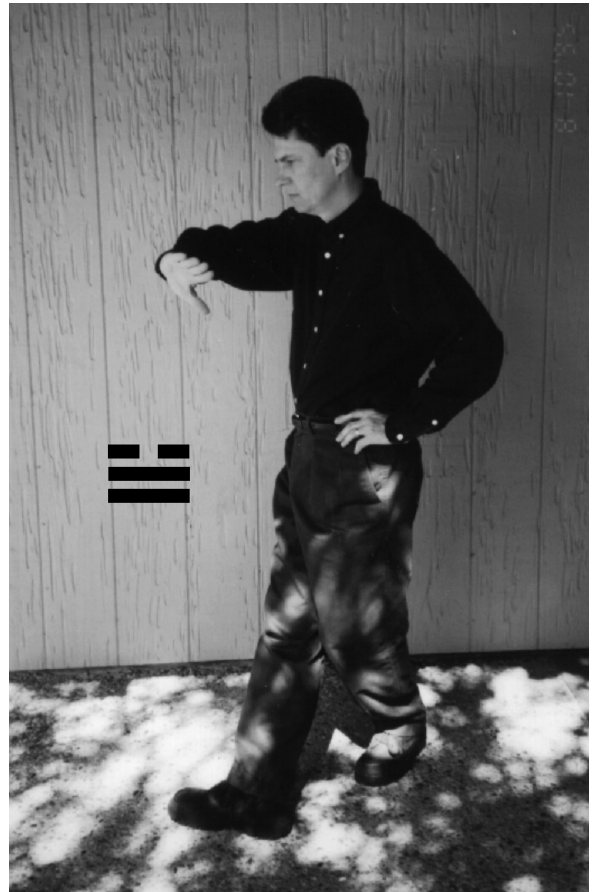
In the Shen Men Tao training, the individual or single handed trigram palms are first practiced separately while walking the circle. Their identifying transitional movements are used to repeat the posture as many times or for as long of a period of time as desired. Each palm is practiced equally on both sides, walking circles to both the right and left. Next, all of the eight different palms are linked together into two separate form routines which represent the Earlier Heaven Arrangement of Fu Xi and the Later Heaven Arrangement of Wen Wang, respectively. Specialized breath work may also be incorporated in the practice as the routines become familiar enough to allow mental attention to focus on additional considerations. Specifically, a Pre-Natal Reversed Breathing is practiced with the Earlier Heaven Form, and a Post-Natal Breathing is practiced with the Later Heaven Form. These Eight Trigram Forms are then followed by the 64 Hexagram Palms Form, which logically combines all of the previous material, while expanding the expression of the simple forms and footwork to a much greater degree of difficulty both athletically and energetically. All of the Shen Men Tao Ba Gua practice methods discussed in this article will be presented in great detail by the author in a forthcoming book and video tape, which will be available in 1996.

See the photos on the next page.

Dr. Gary Stier, OMD, LAc, is a Licensed Acupuncturist and Doctor of Oriental Medicine who lives in Austin, Texas with his wife and family. Dr. Stier is 46 years old, and has been a practitioner of Chinese martial arts for the past 34 years. He is the current President of the North American Pan Su Shen Tao Association, and a Region Six Board of Directors Member of the United States Kung Fu Wu Shu Federation. Dr. Stier may be contacted at the Holistic Healing Center in Austin as listed in the Instructor's Directory.



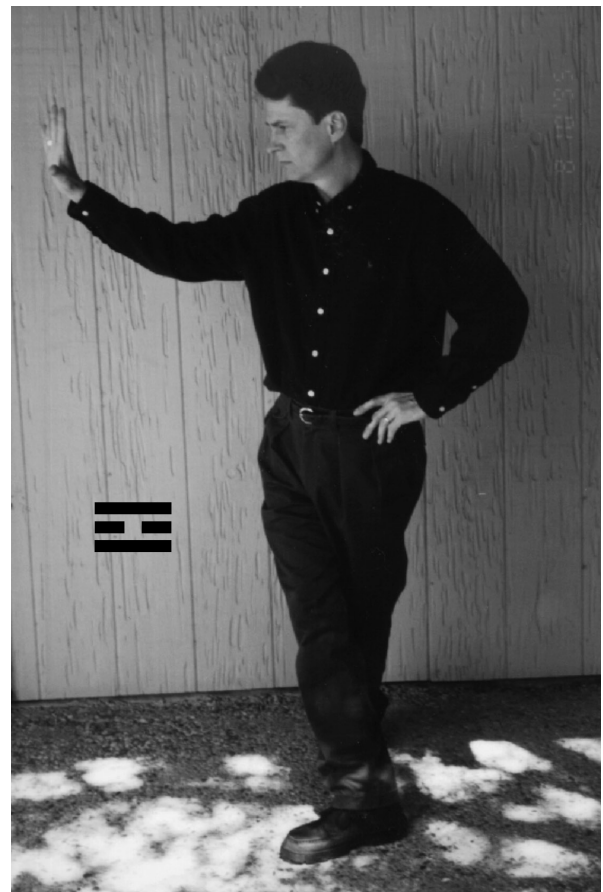
Qian (The Creative) The Heaven Gua



Dui (The Joyous) The Lake Gua



Zhen (The Arousing) The Thunder Gua



Li (The Clinging) The Fire Gua

The 1995 International Ba Gua Zhang Conference, Beijing, China

by John D. Bracy

Create this image in your mind: a bus load of classic looking Ba Gua masters, just the way they would look in a Hollywood martial arts movie. Some are bald, some sport classical "master-like" beards, many wear the trademark blue jacket customary to a generation of older Chinese, all of them represent the different styles of Ba Gua. They are all smiling and talking to each other as they bounce along in a rickety Chinese bus on the way to lunch. While I've asked you to imagine this picture, this was just one of the many unforgettable images from my recent trip to China.

In September I traveled to Beijing to attend the Second Annual International Ba Gua Conference. Being the only American instructor in attendance, my Chinese hosts treated me as a royal guest. The best seats at dinners and special events were reserved for me. Everyone was supportive and friendly, not only toward me but to all the other attendees, regardless of Ba Gua style or affiliation. We have a lot to learn from our Chinese Ba Gua brethren.

Although promoted as an international conference, the "international" aspect consisted of one American, three Brazilians, one South Korean, and a handful of Japanese and North Koreans (additional representation included one Swede who took part in the competition phase). The participants numbered about 200; those actively involved were predominantly male with an age

range from 10 to 86 years. The event was organized in this manner:

- Day One** - Discussion
- Day Two** - Competitions
- Day Three** - Field trip to Dong Hai Chuan's home in An Wei
- Day Four** - Presentation of papers on Ba Gua and related subjects, closing ceremony's and formal dinner
- Day Five** - Master's demo and group picture taking.

Day 1: Registration & Discussion Period

The schedule for day one was listed as an informal discussion period. What this really meant was that everyone hung around the parking lot. There was not much interaction between teams and groups and there was no organized meeting. However, for me, because of the openness and free access to Ba Gua seniors, whose years of experience often matched or surpassed my age, the arrangement was great.

Everyone there was approachable, even my very limited Chinese language ability; a smile goes a long way; also a friend and a part time translator came in handy. For anyone planning to attend this event in the future note that no translators were available so you should consider arranging for one if you don't speak at least some Chinese. For the Ba Gua enthusiast, this "discussion period" is a dream come true. Teachers and practitioners from all over China brought together in one parking lot created a grand supermarket of kung fu masters. You could find anything you wanted here. Fast Ba Gua, no problem; slow Ba Gua, no problem; exotic weird looking styles, just look on aisle 3. How about "Tai Ji Ba Gua?" One teacher had his students showing off this style to me, at least until I asked too many (nice) questions and he looked away which was the cue for one of his senior students to come up and talk to me (run interference). It was clear that they didn't want too many questions asked about the particular lineage.

Another teacher exhibited what I called the "Spock" (Star Trek) method. This approach was demonstrated by Hu Po Luan. To demonstrate this method of Ba Gua, the teacher began with the shaking of his entire frame, moving into the classic Ba Gua guard stance all the while continuing to shake and ending up with the extended palm being in the characteristic finger-spread-into-a "V" salute. When queried about the purpose of this technique he became vague. He said



Li Chang Hua of Shan Dong Province with his "master-like" beard and "trademark" blue jacket



Hu Po Luan demonstrating his Ba Gua Zhang method at the conference

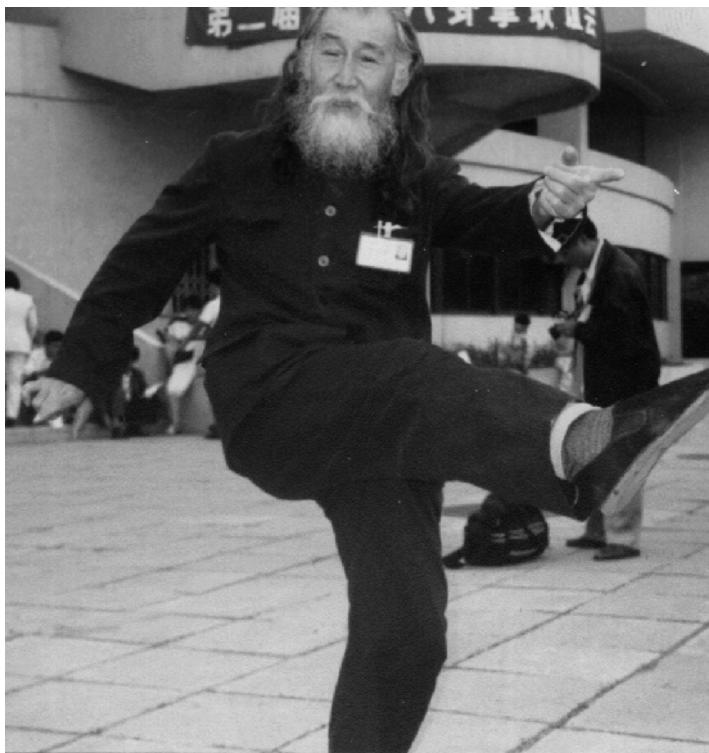
that it was too difficult to explain the purpose.

Pan Xue Ju was one of the two principle coordinators of the event. According to Pan, the purpose of the event was to develop and spread Traditional Chinese kung fu to the world. Expecting some deep philosophical insight, I asked Pan what, in his opinion, was the common underlying principle of Ba Gua Zhang, his answer was simple and the obvious: "walking practice done in a circle while every part of the body conforms to the circle." In regards to correct vs. incorrect practice of the art, Pan said that usability was the most important factor in determining "correctness." His opinion of the stylistic performance "Wu Shu" Ba Gua methods was that these were centered on health, not martial values. His advice for American practitioners: "select teachers and practice according to one's needs." Pan said that in this regard it is important to discriminate between usability or health goals when choosing a style, approach, or teacher.

The methods exhibited as large a range as the ages. Some practiced and competed with slow, Tai Ji-like,



Author, John Bracy, with the event coordinator Pan Xue Ju



Liang Zhen Pu Stylist Li Chang Hua demonstrates his Ba Gua Zhang

internal *qi gong* focus and determination, some with fast and furious movements, which appeared extremely effective, not unlike a tiger on the chase. As noted above, this was not a conference for adults only. A large children's team came from the area of Dong Hai Chuan's hometown. This group consisted of boys and girls that ranged from 10 to 15 years of age.

On man that impressed me was Li Chang Hua, a 70 year old practitioner from Shan Dong Province and of the Liang Zhen Pu lineage. His teacher was Liang's famous student Guo Gu Ming (see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 3, page 22). His movements were quick paced, with celerity and agility betraying his age. His technique was fast in skill, exhibited with impressive precision, fast changing and no doubt highly usable. It took him only 44 years of practice to reach this height. (I should have known by his distinctive beard that he shared some Ba Gua family relationship to Vince Black.)

Day 2: Official Opening

Kang Ge Wu, the event co-chairman, declared the official beginning of the conference at a grand banquet presented at a nearby hotel. Television cameras were present and several important officials attended the dinner and gave speeches, among them were Xu Tia, Chairman of martial arts in China and China Olympic committee member. Also present were the Beijing Martial Arts committee members, Li Zi Ming's daughter, and others. I had to be vigilant for the occasional pan of the T.V. camera so to be alert when one of those token shots of the White man from the West would be taken that I wouldn't be shown eating too fast or slouching



Author, John Bracy, demonstrates his Ba Gua Zhang in the competition

over. Once when I was engaged in conversation with Jerry Lin, my trusty translator, Xu Tai, the aforementioned Chairman, appeared with several other dignitaries behind me for a press photographer who appeared in front at the same time. The novelty of being treated as if I was a celebrity eventually got tiresome.

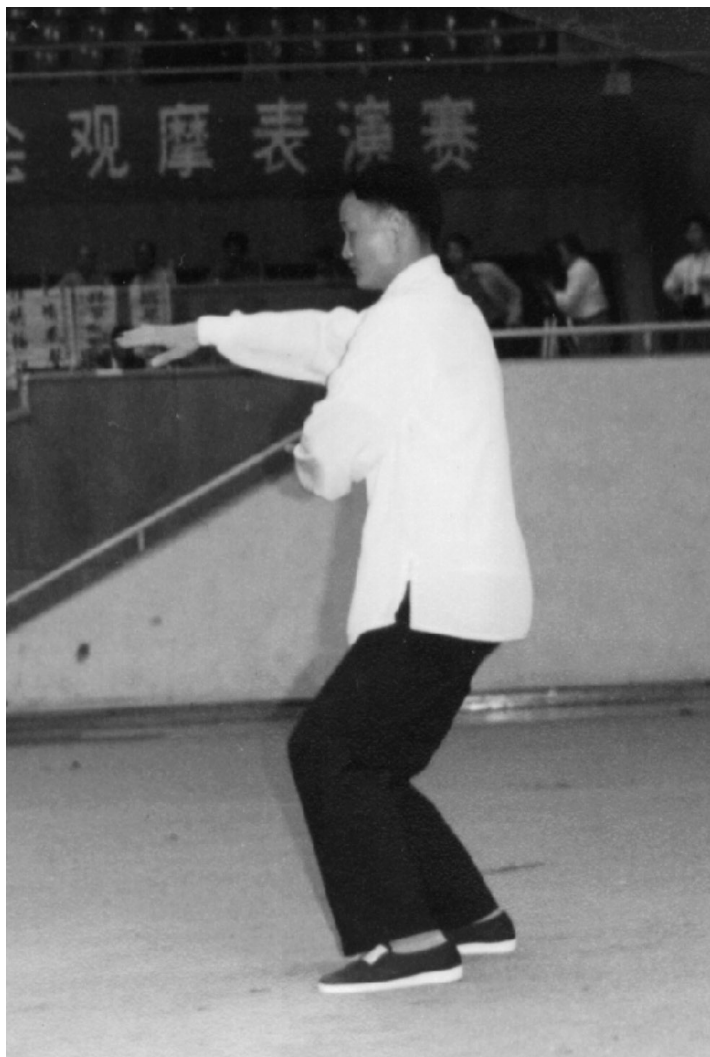
Day 3: Competitions

As I walked into the warm-up area packed with Ba Gua practitioners on the morning of the competitions my first thought was that there must be an official uniform for Ba Gua in China. More than 80% of the competitors wore an entirely white flowing "silk" style uniform. In the United States I am used to small groups of Ba Gua stylists at tournaments. Imagine the feeling of being in a large competition arena, the setting equal to the largest of martial arts tournaments, with the difference that there were only Ba Gua practitioners.

In the morning was the Ba Gua solo form competitions with divisions being established for children, young adults (under 45) and older adults. The afternoons were devoted to weapons and two-man routines. Just as in the other phases of the conference, easiness and feeling of cooperation characterized the event, with no evidence of problems between various sects. I stopped and spoke with one instructor accompanied by two young competitors. He wanted to get our picture

taken together and felt no hesitation whatsoever in interrupting a nearby competition entrant and asking him to take our picture. Keep in mind that they didn't know each other and the man was in the middle of practicing his routine and preparing for competition. I thought that the man would be irritated or angry because of the interruption, but to the contrary, he happily assisted us with the photograph. I couldn't imagine this degree of comfortableness and good feelings (especially when interrupted in the middle of a routine) in my country's Ba Gua or other martial circles.

In Ba Gua competitions in China, the possibilities are endless. Competitions are intermixed between slow styles, fast styles, wu shu styles, even highly acrobatic styles featuring rolls, tumbling and inverted positions with legs kicking and spinning in the air with the shoulders on the ground. Recently there has been much discussion about Ba Gua stepping variations and methods in U.S. martial arts literature. From what I saw in the competitions and the demonstrations that followed most used the same basic step with nothing much special about it. This might have been due to the nature of the floor (industrial grade carpet) or other factors.



Park Seong Ju, from Korea, demonstrates his Ba Gua Zhang in the competition



Dong Hai Chuan's family home

Day 3: Field Trip

Fortunately my stomach was upset the morning of the field trip and I was unable to attend. I did not have to endure the 3 1/2 hour and the 4 1/2 hour bus rides to and from Wen An and the home of Dong Hai Chuan. However, it was a major event for Dong's town. Dong Hai Chuan's family home was the main attraction. The home town village made a grand presentation. Everyone came out for the event; flag waving children lined the streets as the conference buses came and the mayor and province officials were there to make speeches. A model of a planned Dong Hai Chuan Ba Gua training center was unveiled. Detailed plans and financial solicitations were made the following day during the paper presentation. According to one person on the trip it seemed that persons appearing to be non-Chinese were not allowed to take pictures of the Dong house and locality.

In regards to the future training center, the part of the income producing the master plan that disturbed me is that they plan to move Dong's tomb to the central part of the training center. Revenue is expected to arrive via tourists and training groups similar to the way the "Shaolin Temple" and "monks" currently receive income.

Day 4: Presentation of Papers

About ten speakers presented papers on a wide range of material during day four of the conference. Zhang Shou Lin spoke on the relationship of Ba Gua

Zhang to the *Yi Jing*. According to Zhang, Ba Gua and the other internal arts, especially Tai Ji, share underlying philosophical roots. Of interest in Zhang report is his feelings that the eight guas of the Ba Gua relate to the eight "turns" of the body; those being the turning at the wrist, neck, elbow, shoulder, middle torso, knee, and ankle. Each joint being exercised thru and conforming to the "rounding" in the Ba Gua circle walking method.



A model of the Dong Hai Chuan martial arts school

A Mr. Guo presented detailed plans for the Dong Hai Chuan training facility to be built in the founder's hometown. Of all the martial arts tests I have gone through, enduring his 45 minute speech was one of the more difficult. At the end of his speech there was a display of those who came forward, cash in hand, wanting to be among the first donors. I don't know if it was my imagination or not, but I had the distinct impression that (since everyone knows all American carry bundles of excess cash at all times, always trying to figure out what to do with the money) that everyone expected me to donate a large sum of cash. Later the speaker approached me. I can't say for sure, but he seemed a little miffed when I wished him luck without making a contribution.

The presentation that most interested me was by Zhang Shui Long who analyzed Ba Gua physical mechanics. Zhang reported on a way to symbolically represent Ba Gua power and use of force principles. Zhang feels that for efficient power and ability to apply to Ba Gua in combat that the body should be angled and not held perfectly straight up and down. According to Zhang, a perfectly vertical posture causes dispersal of power. He contrasts this to a posture which holds a slight angle in one direction which allows concentration of power through the slight angle, and concentration of force along the newly emerging axis. (I got a copy of Zhang's paper and diagrams and will submit it in a later article after I have it translated.)

Chinese conferences can be challenging. In one case a long, pre-recorded speech of someone who was unable to attend played on a tape recorder. Ten minutes into the speech most stopped pretending to be interested. After about 20 minutes someone showed mercy by turning off the tape. I felt sorry for the young children who were forced to sit through most of this and the other presentations.

Day 5: Masters Demonstrations and Pictures

Again the weird feeling strikes me of being in the midst of some 200 Ba Gua practitioners. Among the demonstrations that were impressive or particularly interesting were eighty-one year old Di Zhao Long wielding a heavy Ba Gua broadsword and a two person demonstration by Sha Guo Cheng's son and his son's wife.

There were several representations of Ba Gua quite unlike anything I had seen before. One elderly man showed off his Ba Gua skill in the form of creating a human perpetual motion machine. His perpetual motion consisted of rapid fire, tightly wound steps of *kou bu* and *bai bu* done in a tight circle without pause or stops. This whirling dervish looked as if he could not stop even if he wanted to (it went on for a while and he looked quite content - no variations just *kou bu*, *bai bu*, *kuo bu* and so forth in one circular direction in the classic Ba Gua guard posture). Eventually, the chief judge ended the display by saying "*hao*" (good), the demonstration then ended and the next performer was able to take the floor.

At the conclusion of the master's demonstrations there was a mass picture taking ceremony. After the picture taking we all returned to the auditorium and that's where the bedlam and the true Ba Gua were apparent as at least a hundred Ba Gua competitors charged the table while pushing and shoving to obtain their certificates of participation and place indicators.

Who Attended and Who Didn't

When I first contacted my Ba Gua "family" in Beijing to tell them that I was planning to attend, I was surprised to learn that no one from my immediate family was planning to be there. In fact, some family members tried to discourage me from attending, saying the event was just a money making endeavor. My teacher, Liu Xing Han (undoubtedly, at 86, one of the oldest Ba Gua masters in China - See *Pa Kua Chang Newsletter*, Vol. 1, Number 1) wrote a note to the chairman saying that he would attend if a car was sent for him. During the event, no special arrangements were made and Liu did not attend. Also missing was Liang Ke Quan (see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Volume 4, Number 4), and many of Beijing's other well known older generation masters. One source, who refused to be identified, said that they didn't particularly want senior instructors who complained too much or too loudly to attend. Obviously there must be many other senior Ba Gua Zhang instructors who did not attend the conference. Thus, it could be argued that the conference did not represent all perspectives on Ba Gua in China.

In Conclusion

This event brought Ba Gua stylists together from all over China. Meeting so many enthusiasts of the Art I love was rewarding so, for me, attending the conference was a positive event (although once was enough). It was good to see so many Ba Gua people together and to see everyone getting along so well. It was also nice to be spoiled and treated like royalty for a few days.

Instructor addresses from the back page of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* were provided to the event organizer. He promised to send information and invitations for next year's event to everyone listed.

John Bracy has been practicing Chinese martial arts for over 28 years and has been teaching traditional kung fu at the Hsing Chen School of Chinese Martial Arts in Orange County, CA since 1976. He holds a B.A. in psychology and in 1981-82 did graduate research in Taipei, Taiwan into psycho-therapeutic applications of acupuncture. He has traveled to mainland China, both by himself and with his students, on numerous occasions to study with his Ba Gua Zhang teacher, Liu Xing Han of Beijing. He was featured, along with his teacher, in the Pa Kua Chang Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1.

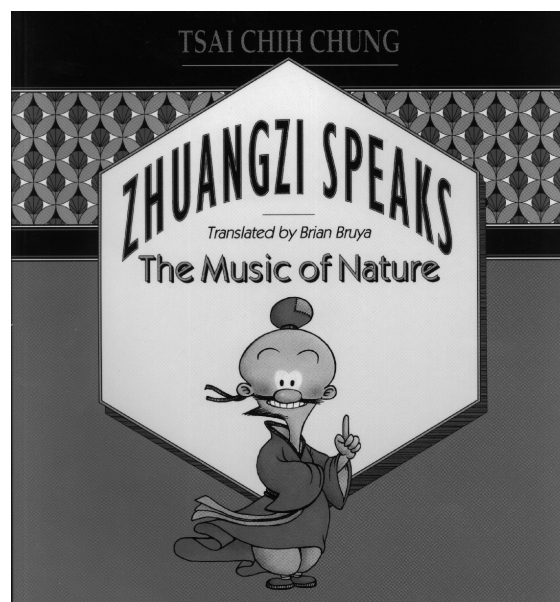
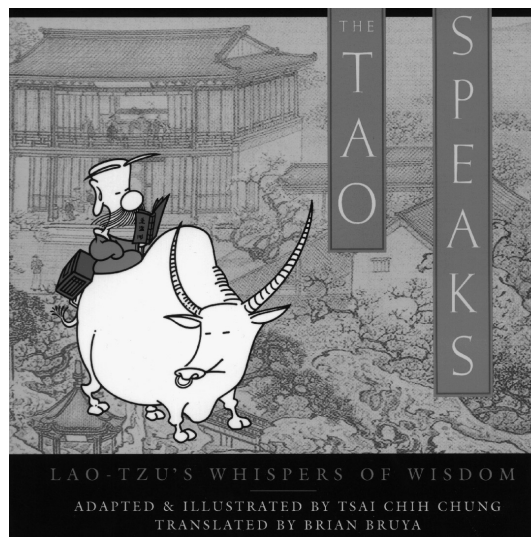
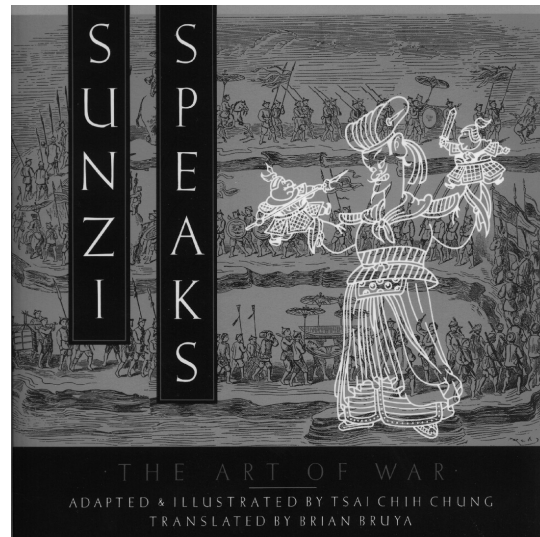
Chinese Philosophy Told in Cartoon Panels

Three of the most famous Chinese philosophical texts are now available in a form that can be understood by everyone. World renowned Taiwanese cartoonist Tsai Chih Chung, whose books have sold over eighteen million copies and been translated into a dozen languages, retells the ancient Chinese wisdom of Sunzi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi in three books of profoundly wise and humorous cartoon renderings.

Zhaungzi and *Laozi* (*Dao De Jing*) are the two primary texts of philosophical Daoism and their teachings have been at the root of all internal martial arts practice. *Sunzi* is the famous work on military strategy that is also an important theoretical basis for many of the tactics of martial arts combat. All internal martial artists will gain great insights into the study of their martial arts by exploring these texts, and now their wisdom is available in a format which we can all understand and enjoy: Cartoons!

Translated by Brian Bruya, these books, *Zhuangzi Speaks*, *Sunzi Speaks*, and *The Tao Speaks*, retell the stories and lessons of the ancient masters through insightful cartoon panels. Each series of panels is only about a page or two in length and relate the lessons of the philosophy of these ancient texts in an easily understandable and entertaining fashion. Tsai Chih Chung's ability to see to the root of the philosophical concepts of these classics and present cartoon illustrations and text which clearly transmits this centuries-old wisdom is remarkable. All of these English translations of Tsai Chih Chung's books also contain the original Chinese notes in the margins of each page as an aid to Chinese speaking readers.

I find myself picking up these books whenever I have a few free



minutes during the day, and I find them excellent reading material to provide a short inspirational message just before bed. What is also very attractive about these books is that they are excellent vehicles to use in passing along the wisdom of the ancient Chinese to young children. The philosophical messages are presented in understandable dialogs and the cartoon renderings make the messages easy to understand and of interest to children.

If you have become bored with trying to wade through the direct English translations of these classics and are looking for a new slant on Chinese philosophy presentation, these books are an outstanding way to seriously study the words of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Sunzi. If you are a fan of Chinese philosophy and have tried to explain these concepts to your spouse, children, or friends without success, share these books with them and the philosophy may no longer appear dull or mysterious to them.

These three books are now available from High View Publications. Please call 1-800-413-8296 to order by VISA or Mastercard, or use the order form in the insert of this issue. *Sunzi Speaks* is presented in an 8X8 inch format, is 140 pages and available for \$10.95, *The Tao Speaks* is presented in an 8X8 format, is 112 pages and is also available for \$10.95, *Zhuangzi Speaks* is presented in an 8 1/2X9 inch format, is 142 pages and is available for \$12.95.

Pa Kua Chang Related Periodicals

Qi: The Journal of Traditional Eastern Health and Fitness: Insight Graphics, Inc., P.O. Box 221343, Chantilly, VA 22022 - Steve Rhodes and his crew at Insight Graphics continue to provide readers with interesting information relating to all aspects of Traditional Eastern health and fitness. The magazine is produced in a very high quality format.

Journal of Asian Martial Arts: 821 West 24th Street, Erie, PA 16502 - This is a high quality publication which provides well researched articles in a scholarly fashion.

Internal Strength: Watercourse Publishing, P.O. Box 280948, Lakewood, CO 80228-0948 - A new periodical dedicated to bringing the reader practical information on all styles of internal arts.

The Journal of the Chen Style Taijiquan Research Association of Hawaii: Published Quarterly by Great Publishing Company, 761 Isenberg St. #A, Honolulu, HI 96826-4541

1995 Calendar of Pa Kua Chang Workshops and Seminars

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Park Bok Nam also teaches weekly classes in Baltimore, MD, and Charlottesville, VA; monthly seminars in New York City and Boston, MA, bi-annual seminars in Europe, and annual Ba Gua retreats on the East and West Coasts of the United States. For more information, call: (804) 794-8384

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