

BAGUAZHANG

—Theory and Applications—

峨眉八卦掌



MASTER LIANG, SHOU-YU • DR. YANG, JWING-MING

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Master Liang, Shou-Yu • Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

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Foreword

Grandmaster Wang, Jurong 王菊蓉教授

The origin of Chinese Wushu (武術) is far and long, and its contents are as numerous as flowers. This has resulted in hundreds of schools and styles, like hundreds of branches and thousands of vines. All of these schools, after being tested and experienced through the long seasons of history, have harvested a great abundance of fruits. Today, these schools have become known for their excellence of styles. The “Baguazhang” introduced in this book is one of the most renowned and traditional of these Chinese martial arts.

“Baguazhang” is a very interesting fist technique (Quan Shu, 拳術) (i.e., martial style). If it is practiced often, it can strengthen the body and increase longevity. It can also train practical martial techniques, providing an effective method of self-defense.

In Baguazhang practice, the upper limbs use in almost all the palms. Various skills are developed from the constant changing of the palm techniques. During the palm training, the lower limbs walk along a circle, and use swaying and arcing stepping as major techniques. Baguazhang combines the theories and patterns of the Eight Trigrams (Bagua, 八卦) of the “*Zhou Yi*” (周易) (*Zhou's Book of Changes*). Consequently, this has resulted in the possibility of changing during walking as desired. Not only that, it allows the possibility of actions such as the palm's boring, turning, sideways and vertical maneuvers.

Baguazhang combines the maneuvers of the palms and stepping techniques, swaying and arcing-stepping for walking and turning, linking each step to the next, and its variations are many. The basic palm techniques of the Baguazhang are “Lao Ba Zhang” (老八掌) (Old Eight Palms). These eight palms can be combined freely in practice. Therefore, they are alive and free, and can be practiced by either a single person or by two persons.

This traditional fist (i.e., martial style) has been a favorite of a great portion of Chinese people for hundreds of years. Today, Baguazhang is gradually winning many foreign friends. However, geographic limitations make it difficult for the exchange of knowledge, and the art is not currently widely known or accepted in the West. This book was written through the collaboration of Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming (楊俊敏), Master Liang, Shou-Yu (梁守渝), and Mr. Wu, Wen-Ching (吳文慶). Together, they have compiled and translated documents regarding the many traditional Baguazhang theories and principles. This could help spread Baguazhang knowledge and techniques to America, Canada, and all other countries of the world. The content of this work is very abundant and profound, and includes discussion and commentary on theory, principles and basic training. Beginning with the basic training of the sixteen words and the cultivation and training of Baguazhang Qigong, it moves on to cover topics such as solo practice of the Old Eight Palms, matching of the Old Eight Palms with a partner, introduction of Gongfu, and a clear and detailed explanation of the three postures: high, middle, and low. Finally, the unique traditional Baguazhang weapon, Yuan-Yang Yue (鴛鴦鉞) (Deer Hook Sword), is also introduced. Working with this weapon will significantly help any practitioner

realize the importance of coordination, harmonious feeling and integrity of Baguazhang as presented in this book.

I am very happy to see the publication of this book, which offers a great guide to Chinese Wushu. I would like to congratulate the authors for their effort and contributions to the popularization of Chinese Wushu (武術).

Professor Wang Jurong

Professor of Shanghai Athletic College
Chinese Wushu, National Judge of Archery
Vice Chairman of Shanghai Wushu Association and
the Head of the Wushu Judging Committee
Wushu Gold Medalist—First National Athletic
Competition, Taiwan, Republic of China, 1953
Grand Guoshu Champion, Women's Division—
Seventh National Athletic Competition Taiwan,
Republic of China, 1946

Foreword

Grandmaster Jiang, Hao-Quan 蔣浩泉教授

During this exciting period when Chinese Wushu is blossoming in every corner of the world, this written contribution by Master Liang, Shou-Yu (梁守渝), Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming (楊俊敏), and Mr. Wu, Wen-Ching (吳文慶) to the development of Chinese Wushu will definitely be both beneficial and influential.

Among the thousands of different martial styles and schools in China, Baguazhang is one of the most famous. Numerous varieties of Baguazhang schools exist today, and the contents of the art are abundant and profound, such as “Wudang Style Baguazhang” (武當八卦掌), “Yin-Yang Style Baguazhang” (陰陽八卦掌), “The Complete Technique Style Baguazhang,” “Emei Style Baguazhang” (峨嵋八卦掌), “Xingyi Style Baguazhang” (形意八卦掌), and “Swimming Body Style Baguazhang” (游身八卦掌).

Among the numerous different styles of Baguazhang, all of them have their specific unique characteristics in technique and movement, which gives rise to thousands of variations and tens of thousands of derivations. However, no matter how numerous or elaborate their variations, none can be separated from their theoretical origins. These origins (i.e., theory and principles) are walking the circle, following the strategies of four directions, four diagonal corners, and the eight trigrams— “the eight directions,” “coordinating the body and hands movements,” “muddy stepping and spinning,” “varying freely as wished,” “the steppings are as firm as Tai Mountain (泰山),” “light and agile as the goose feather,” and “the shapes are like eight animals’ actions.” In the attacks, “the defense is hidden within and in the defense, the offense is ready to return,” “use the soft to conquer the hard, and mutually support with the hard,” and “once move slightly, the entire body moves.”

In muddy stepping circle training, the movements often adopt the shape of animals, and coordinate with the key techniques of “striking, kicking, wrestling, and controlling.” In Chinese Wushu, further advancement achieves the goal of “internally cultivate the mind and the mental body, externally strengthen the tendons and the bones, and ever-more perfectly train the techniques for defense.” This is the unique characteristic of the “Baguazhang Fist Techniques.” “Emei Baguazhang” also includes all of these unique characteristics. The contents of this book are abundant and profound. It is a good first book, teaching both theoretical foundations and actual techniques.

One of the authors, Mr. Liang, Shou-Yu, was born in 1943 in Sichuan (四川), China. He was raised in a Wushu family, and trained martial techniques devotedly with his grandfather, as a child. Later in his youth he was even more infatuated with martial arts, and visited many well-known Chinese martial arts mountains, learning from many talented masters. During these years of special training and practice, both his martial theory and techniques advanced rapidly. He has mastered both Shaolin (少林) and Wudang (武當) martial fists and various weapons, whether for solo practice or matching training. His expertise is especially in Shuai Jiao (摔跤) (i.e., Chinese Wrestling). He has

written numerous martial books and videotapes. Before his arrival in North America, he had taught many students in China. In 1981, he arrived in Seattle, and since then has been teaching Wushu in Washington state in America, and at University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He has cultivated many talented students and well-known movie stars. He has earned the title “International Wushu Judge,” and has orchestrated great success for the Chinese Wushu community.

The second author of this book, Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born in 1946, in Taiwan, Republic of China. He also loved Wushu since he was a child, and started his Wushu training at the age of fifteen. He built his Wugong (武功) (i.e., Martial Gongfu) from the Shaolin White Crane style. Later, he received much instruction from numerous well-known Wushu Masters, especially from Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清), the successful student of the well-known grandmaster Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂). He has studied and practiced intelligently, and has specially mastered the martial techniques and their theories. He has gathered Shaolin (少林), Xingyi (形意), Bagua (八卦), Taiji (太極), and various weapons knowledge in his mind, and has written many popular Wushu books. Dr. Yang obtained his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University in 1978. He and his student Mr. Jeffery Bolt founded the Yang’s Shaolin Kung Fu Academy in 1980. When Dr. Yang later moved to Boston, he founded Yang’s Martial Arts Association (YMAA). Since then he has taught many students, and has passed down Chinese Gongfu to the public. He has visited and offered seminars and workshops in many countries such as Canada, Italy, France, Mexico, England, Ireland, Germany, Portugal, Switzerland, and Saudi Arabia. He has contributed greatly to the spread of Chinese Wushu in the world.

Master Liang, Dr. Yang, and Mr. Wu’s Emei Baguazhang book is unique and special among Chinese Wushu publications, and I believe it will be favored by the public.

Professor Jiang Hao-Quan

May 25, 1993

Note: Professor Jiang, Hao-Quan (蔣浩泉教授) is a well-known older generation martial artist, professor, and doctor. Born in 1917, Jiangshu (江蘇), China, he graduated with honors from Nanking Central Guoshu Institute (Nanjing Zhong Yang Guoshu Guan, 南京中央國術館). He specialized in Shaolin, Xingyi, Bagua, Taiji, Sparring, Wrestling, Boxing, Solo and Matching forms. He has held the title of “Chinese Fist King,” defeating many challengers from around the world. He is a national level judge in China for Wushu, Water Jumping, Swimming, Gymnastics, and Boxing. He possesses an honorary doctorate from Eurotechnical Research University in Hawaii, and has authored many Wushu books. Professor Jiang is currently writing a Wushu book entitled Jiang Hao-Quan: Wushu Gathering of the Truth. This book will include three volumes and will include Shaolin, Wudang Fist Techniques, Qin Na, Weapons, Fast Wrestling, boxing, and the most modern fighting techniques.

Foreword

Shifu Jerry Alan Johnson

It seems that in every decade, the eyes of the martial arts public focus their attention on a different branch of the tree. In the 1950's, attention was focused on Judo, as that particular system became more open to the public and more accessible to Westerners. In the 1960's, the focus turned to Karate. In the 1970's it was Shaolin Kung Fu, and the 1980's saw a time of fascination with the Ninja and Kickboxing. Each decade unveiled a different combative approach and philosophy to the martial arts. It is only fitting that now the focus of attention is being placed on the Internal Systems of martial arts training.

The increased freedom of travel and open communications between instructors has allowed concealed knowledge to grow and expand at a remarkably rapid rate. We are indeed fortunate to have access to true martial arts masters, men who are both extremely proficient in their martial ability as well as their knowledge of the internal healing systems, who are willing to share their educated insights. Both Master Liang, Shou-Yu and Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming are two such men. I have admired and respected both of these men for their high level of skill, openness, and honesty—which from my experience only comes through confidence developed through years of practice and training.

The Baguazhang system presented in this book is from the Emei Mountains, has been concealed from the public for centuries, and has been taught only to a discriminating few. To receive this priceless gift of insight on this esoteric Bagua system is both wonderful and rare. The martial arts community as a whole owes these two men warm, heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

Shifu Jerry Alan Johnson

May 14, 1993

Foreword

Dr. John Painter

A serious medical condition almost ended my life. Medical doctors told my family that they could expect me to be frail and sickly, and that I might not live past eighteen with the hand nature had dealt me. By the time I entered grade school, my immune system was failing. Constant headaches, colds, flu, and chronic infections became the rule instead of the exception. I was weak, frail, and unhappy. But I had a dream. A dream to be healthy, strong, and happy like other boys. I wanted that dream badly; I just didn't know how to go about making it come true.

Shortly before my eleventh birthday, I was introduced to and began studying Nine Dragon Baguazhang and Qigong with Dr. Frank Li. A cousin of Master Li, Ching-Yuan (李青雲), the famous Daoist scholar and martial arts master reputed to have lived over 200 years, Li, Ching-Yuan claimed that his remarkable longevity and strength were due to his special diet and daily practice of the internal martial art and Qigong style that he devised while studying in the Emei Mountains (峨嵋山) of Sichuan (四川). He named his style, which he passed on to Dr. Li, Jiulong Baguazhang (九龍八卦掌) (Nine Dragon Eight Trigram Palm). Dr. Li was a Chinese Physician, martial artist and herbalist of the old school before immigrating to America in 1945. The Li family had been respected bodyguards and Chinese traditional healers from the Emei Mountain region in China.

From 1957 to 1969, I worked mornings and evenings on a daily schedule with Dr. Li to learn this system. In the first year, my illness diminished, and my immune system grew stronger. Within three years, I found the physical health and stamina of which I had so often dreamed. Today, at the age of 47, my physical health has never been better. Baguazhang has, for me, accomplished what Western science and medicine could not. I am convinced that through dedicated practice of Baguazhang, one can enrich every aspect of daily life, cure many chronic ailments and alleviate the stress that so often shortens life span and fosters the spread of many diseases.

To profit from an internal martial art one has to emphasize and focus upon both the external forms (the bio-mechanics), as well as the internal work or Qigong that is part of that particular style. True Baguazhang skill cannot be had by copying only external forms from a teacher, video or book. Not delving deeply into the philosophy and practicing the Qigong is like having a field of dirt, some water, and a hoe and believing that this is enough to grow crops. Without planting seeds, no fruit will be forth coming.

There are many styles and interpretations of Baguazhang. My style of Emei Nine Dragon Baguazhang is not precisely the same as that presented in this book. This really makes no difference, as all styles share a core truth which serves as the base for all Baguazhang practice. Every teacher has a different way of expressing his understanding of the art. While this diversity imparts the art with a unique flavor to the beginner, it is often confusing. Beginners are usually looking for some type of external stability to cling to in a Daoist art that is comprised of the ever changing principles of the *Yi Jing* (易經).

At the root of all Baguazhang practice lies the changing nature of the Universe, a concept centered in Daoist philosophy. The Baguazhang student will soon learn that life and all existence is in a state of constant flux. He learns to become one with the ever changing moment, to give up all attachment, static thought patterns and rigid postures and just go with the flow of the moment.

The Baguazhang master can express physically with his body what the mind and heart feel to be eternal truth. To do this, he must eventually go beyond external form and find his own inner freedom and power. This is the primary goal of the Baguazhang master, to be one with the Dao.

Over the years, my Emei Nine Dragon Baguazhang techniques have brought me radiant health and many friends. As a martial art, Baguazhang has also stood me in good stead in my career as a tactical trainer for police and government agents, and as a former professional bodyguard. I quickly learned the hard way what really works and what doesn't on the streets. That is why I say that Baguazhang as a health system and a martial art, when properly learned and practiced, is a shining jewel among the stones.

I thank Master Liang, Shou-Yu and Dr. Yang for their many years of true friendship and support of my efforts to introduce Baguazhang to the West, but most of all for their unselfish desire to promote this wonderful art to all people—through their fine book on Emei Baguazhang—without holding anything back.

John Painter, Ph.D.
April 9, 1993
Arlington, Texas

Preface

Master Liang, Shou-Yu 梁守渝

I am very happy to have once again collaborated with Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming to write this book. First, I have to express my thanks for Dr. Yang's encouragement and his many forms of assistance. My contribution to this book was merely to introduce certain "Sequences" or "Practicing Routines" of Emei Baguazhang. Dr. Yang has actually contributed most of the hard work. He is a well-known Gongfu (功夫) expert and a scholar. During the writing process, he always endeavored to find the deeper essence of the art and look for the best within the best. I have learned so much from him during our association. When we write a book together, neither of us have thought or concern for self-benefit or profit. We think only of how to write a good book and introduce our knowledge to the reader. From these efforts, we hope only to obtain some joy and satisfaction through the increased Western understanding of Chinese culture.

A further contributor to this book is Shifu Wu, Wen-Ching whose hard work and insight enabled us to complete our task much sooner than we could otherwise. I thank him for his help and especially for his assistance to me personally. In addition, I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Reza Farman-Farmaian for his skillful photography.

The history of Chinese martial arts (Wushu) is very deep and long. The origin of the art can be traced back hundreds, or even a thousand years. Consequently, there exist a great number of different styles.

In China, most families know the names of Wushu styles such as Shaolin, Wudang, and Emei. Outside of China, however, and especially in the West, only Shaolin and Wudang have become popular. This is simply because Emei Gongfu has always been kept secret, conserved by its disciples. Oral instruction has been the main method of passing the art from one generation to the next. Written documents are very scarce. Because of this, there has never yet been a book competent to introduce Emei martial arts in a complete manner. Despite this, the Emei martial arts have been preserved and publicized widely in Sichuan laymen society and have generated many highly skilled and famous martial artists. Emei Wushu has thus been representative of the mysterious and secret high arts of Gongfu, and is commonly used as a subject in Chinese novels, movies, and operas.

In 1983, the Chinese government established an investigative team called: "The Martial Arts Archaeological Organization" (武術挖掘小組), targeting every province in order to discover, organize, and systematically document all Wushu styles. According to this investigation, there are sixty-eight existing styles or schools, more than one thousand barehand sequences or practice routines, more than five hundred sequences or practice routines of various weapons, and more than three hundred ways of training Gongfu power. The techniques, the fighting strategies, and even the methods of strengthening the power within each style are unique and have their own special characteristics. In fact, according to my knowledge, there is still much information about many additional styles

or schools that has not yet been discovered and compiled. Some old masters have stated that there are at least seventy-two styles or schools.*

Baguazhang is one of the main styles in Emei Wushu history. Emei Wugong (峨嵋武功) (i.e., martial Gongfu) includes both Daoist and Buddhist practices. Baguazhang has similarly divided into Daoist and Buddhist Baguazhang. Among the seventy-two Emei martial styles presently known to me, there are five styles that teach Baguazhang. Some of these train walking in a circular pattern, as do many other Baguazhang styles. However, there are also some Emei Baguazhang styles that walk in a straight line. Naturally, the names of the techniques and sequences also differ. According to one recent survey, there are more than thirty kinds of Baguazhang training that include fundamentals, barehand, weapons, and matching sets. Some of them are closely related to Master Dong, Hai-Chuan (董海川) and Sun, Lu-Tang (孫祿堂). The names and the movements are very similar in some respects, and very different in others. Therefore, great effort is still needed to understand and research the roots of these styles.

I started learning Emei Da Peng Gong (Emei Great Roc Gong, 峨嵋大鵬功) from my grandfather Liang, Zhi-Xiang (梁芷箱) when I was six years old. Later, I also learned some other Emei Gongfu. My grandfather had many martial friends, and he always wanted me to learn other Gongfu styles from them. Among them was a man named Hong, Ze (洪澤). Later he was called “Hong Ze Great Master” (洪澤大師). He had been trained in a Daoist temple called: “The Temple of the Great Emperor of Martial Arts” on Zhen Wu Mountain (真武山), located on the south of Yangtze River (揚子江). He also learned Emei Da Peng Gong from my grandfather. My knowledge of Swimming Body (Swift Dragon) Baguazhang, Deer Hook Sword, Bagua Crutch, and Wujiqian (無極拳) originated from him.

In 1960, after I entered West-South National University, I learned more Baguazhang from Master Zheng, Huai-Xian (鄭懷賢). Master Zheng was a student of Grandmaster Sun, Lu-Tang (孫祿堂). He was the vice chairman of the Chinese Wushu Federation. Master Zheng represented China in the Wushu demonstration during the 1936 Olympics, held in Germany. At this time I also learned Xingyiquan and fundamental Bagua Eight Palms from Master Wang, Shu-Tian (王樹田). Master Wang was born on June 25, 1908 in Xincheng County (新城縣), Hebei Province (河北省). In 1928, he passed the “national examination” and entered Nanking Central Guoshu Institute to further advance his martial arts career. A few of the well-known teachers there at that time were: Zhu, Guo-Zhen (朱國禎) (principal), Zhu, Guo-Fu (朱國福) (administrator), Wang, Ziping (王子平) (head coach of Shaolin), Sun, Lu-Tang (孫祿堂) (head coach of Wudang styles), and Gao, Zhen-Dong (高振東). Master Wang’s classmates included Zhang, Chang-Hai (張長海), Zhao, Fei-Zhen (趙飛震), Shi, Han-Zhang (時漢章), Zhu, Guo-Xiang (朱國祥), and Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂). Since 1980, Master Wang has held the position of Chairman of the Sichuan Wushu Federation. In addition, he has

**The Complete Book of Sichuan Wushu*, 1989. 四川武術大全。

been a member of the National Wushu Federation, the president of the Sichuan Emei Gongfu Institute and Sichuan Guofu Wushu Institute, the Chairman of the Internal Martial Arts Research Institute, the Principal of the Sichuan Emei Wushu School, and the Wushu Professor of the Chengdu Athletic Institute.

The Bagua Eight Palms I learned from Master Wang is typical and representative of the style in general. In fact, almost all of the Bagua Eight Palms currently popular in China are very similar, albeit with some slight differences. In Emei Wugong (峨眉武功) training, most Baguazhang practitioners favor this style, and it is commonly used as the foundation of Baguazhang training. Furthermore, I have also been most fortunate to learn and exchange Baguazhang knowledge with other masters and friends, such as Sha, Guo-Zheng (沙國政) and Zhao, Zi-Qiu (趙子虯). All the above sources have greatly contributed to my understanding of Baguazhang. Today in my deep heart, I do and always will appreciate the knowledge I have learned from all of them.

Chinese martial arts history extends back many thousands of years. Its contents are wide, deep and filled with treasures for the mind, body and spirit. Though I have learned and researched Chinese martial arts for over forty years, and have been involved in the study of Baguazhang for more than thirty years, I have still not yet understood all of its essence. I still need to learn continuously. There is a saying in Chinese Gongfu society: “Live until old, learn until old.” In Chinese Wugong (武功) (i.e., martial Gongfu), one should never feel self-satisfied.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal appreciations to Madam Wang, Jurong (王菊蓉) and the many others who have written forewords for this book. Madam Wang is one of the last living representatives of an entire generation of martial arts masters. She has helped me in many ways, both by inspiring courage in me and by being my teacher. Madam Wang’s father, Wang, Ziping (王子平) was one of the most famous martial artists and teachers in recent Chinese martial arts history. He has been my idol and an inspiration to my martial arts training for many years. Thanks also to Professor Jiang, Hao-Quan (蔣浩泉), for writing his eloquent foreword to this book. Professor Jiang graduated from Central Guoshu Institute in the 1940’s, and is one of the few remaining representatives of the older generation of martial artists. He is also an expert in Baguazhang. He learned his Baguazhang from the very famous master Yin Fu’s son, Yin, Yu-Zhang (尹玉璋). His distinguished lineage and achievements have brought him great fame in the Chinese martial arts world. Naturally, I also appreciate the contributions by Shifu Jerry Alan Johnson and Dr. John Painter.

I would like to thank my uncle, Jeffrey D. S. Liang and aunt Eva for adopting me when I was a child. Without them, I would not be where I am today. Although political turmoil in China separated us for nearly 40 years, through their effort we were reunited in 1981, in Seattle, Washington. Later, they assisted me in gaining employment at the University of British Columbia, making it possible for me to immigrate to Canada. This changed my whole life. Uncle Jeffrey, once a diplomat, an engineer, and then a cultural and social advocate, has been for years recorded as a biographee in Marquis *Who’s Who*

in the World, and several other Marquis publications. Aunt Eva has also gained recognition—in her teens as a silver medalist in Wushu fighting competition at Chongqing (重慶).

Thanks to Mr. Harry Fan for offering me my first job in Canada at the Vila Cathy Care Home during a critical time. It gave me the opportunity to make myself known to Canadian communities, and to offer my knowledge to the people of North America.

Thanks to Mr. Raymond Y. Ching, Ms. Taisun Wang, Dr. W. Robert Morford, and Mr. Arthur J. Lee—all of whom helped me when I first arrived in Canada and had a most difficult time. They assisted me in gaining employment at the UBC, and in receiving my immigration visa to Canada. Thanks also to Mr. Paul Ha, Dr. W. Robert Schutz, and Ms. Sonya Lumhoist-Smith. Because of their help, the Chinese Martial Arts in the UBC continues to develop and grow.

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I am very excited that we have completed and published this book, and are once again able to share with the Western public what we are privileged to know. I sincerely hope the readers enjoy this book, and I wish everybody peace and happiness.

Liang, Shou-Yu
April 10, 1992

Preface

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming 楊俊敏博士

Since the 1960's, Chinese martial arts have become ever more popular in the Western world. This is especially true for the internal styles, such as Taijiquan (太極拳), Xingyiquan (形意拳), and Baguazhang (八卦掌), because people are now realizing that by practicing these arts they can not only learn effective self-defense techniques, but can also gain significant improvements in their health.

This is not surprising, given that the internal Chinese martial styles are based on Qi (氣) theory, and are considered part of Qigong (氣功) (internal energy) training. Qi is the Chinese word for the natural energy of the universe. Qigong is the science of this energy, especially as it circulates in the human body. The Chinese have been studying Qi for over four thousand years, and they have learned how to apply their knowledge of this energy to meditation, and to certain types of movements designed both to improve physical and mental health, and to increase longevity. The Chinese have found that Qi theory and principles can also be used to increase muscular power to a much higher level than usual. This is done by energizing the muscles with Qi through the concentrated, meditative mind.

Although Baguazhang is classified as an internal style, its theory, principles, and applications are different from those of better-known internal styles such as Taijiquan and Xingyiquan. Taijiquan emphasizes power that is soft like a whip, while Xingyiquan's power is explosive like a cannon. Baguazhang's power, however, is more like an inflated beach ball: the practitioner's body becomes full of energy, which can be moved about at will and can be manifested to bounce an enemy a great distance away. While Taijiquan emphasizes using defense as an offense, and Xingyiquan emphasizes using offense as a defense, Baguazhang employs both defensive and offensive strategies. While Taijiquan focuses on middle and short range fighting techniques, and Xingyiquan concentrates almost exclusively on short range fighting, Baguazhang trains at all three fighting ranges: short, middle, and long. While Xingyiquan is characterized by straight forward advancing and straight backward retreating movements, both Taijiquan and Baguazhang emphasize roundness and circular movements, yet Baguazhang manifests power in its circular movements in a way that is quite different from Taijiquan.

Baguazhang has only eight basic movements, but the variations and applications of these movements are unlimited. It is like dancing the waltz, which has only three basic steps, but hundreds of variations. Therefore, although the beginner will find Baguazhang easier to learn than many other arts, it will still take more than ten years of pondering and practice to reach the deeper levels of understanding and application. Because of this, it is a good style for the beginner who does not have any experience in the internal styles. It is also good as a second internal style for those who have already learned one, as it will increase their understanding of their first style. For those who are only interested in health, Baguazhang provides a few simple movements that promote vigor and stamina, while helping to rebalance the Qi.

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