

The Right Path of Yiquan



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Table of Contents

Disclaimer _____	3
A Note from the Translators _____	3
Author's Preface _____	5
Changing One's Strength with Zhanzhuang (Pile Standing) _____	7
Training the Muscles, the Tendons, and the Bones _____	8
Exerting Strength _____	10
Training the Qi _____	11
Nourishing the Qi _____	12
Syncretism of the Five Elements _____	14
Six Harmonies _____	15
Formulas Put into Verse _____	15
The Classical Method of Hand-to-Hand Fighting _____	16
Dragon Method _____	19
Tiger Method _____	20
The Right Path of Yiquan _____	21

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Piratism, despite being a crime, will also lead to no further translations being made – the translators need to get paid for the work to make their living and are very thankful to all of you who have bought this E-book.

A Note from the Translators

This is the second, revised edition of "The Right Path of Yiquan". The first edition was published on December 7th, 2000. The corrections are mainly grammatical and some words have been changed to make their original meaning clearer. We want to express our deepest gratitude to everyone, especially Bertram Chock, who has helped us making this translation better.

"The Right Path of Yiquan" is the first book published by Mr. Wang Xiangzhai. It was published only a few years after the founding of Yiquan. Although Wang states Damo as the founder of Yiquan in the book, one should know that the training methods of Yiquan do not originate from those ancient times, only the essence, which is also the essence of Zen.

At the time Wang Xiangzhai wrote this book, his approach to physiological things was a very traditional Chinese approach, which many of the western readers might find hard to grasp. For example, Wang writes about shrinking the bones, which we all know is physiologically impossible, but Wang wrote from his own experience, telling about the feelings he had personally had. Naturally he had not shrunk his bones, but the muscles around the bones contracting with a great force do indeed produce a feeling of tightness around the bones, which feels as if the bones were shrinking. We have added commentary to the text to make it more understandable for the western readers. All of our comments are in the footnotes, the comments in brackets were all written by Wang Xiangzhai himself. Still, many things cannot be truly understood just by reading them, they must be perceived in actual practice, even the best books can never be anything more than just helpful guides.

We would also like to note that Wang Xiangzhai, and also many of his students, kept on developing the training methods of Yiquan even after the art

was founded and this book was published. Thus today, the training method of Yiquan is somewhat different from the times of this book, however, the essence is still the same. Later Wang stopped using concepts such as the tiger method, the dragon method, etc., but it does not mean that their essence did not remain - it is not important how things are called or expressed, only grasping their quintessence matters. As the sciences progressed in the 20th century, Wang also came to criticize openly many traditional concepts, such as the Dantian qi, as inappropriate.

There exist several different versions of this book in Chinese. Their differences are very small though, usually one character has changed into another similar looking character in a few places, and thus most of these differences originate from errors in copying or typing. We have compared these different versions trying to select the correct parts of each one of them and to eliminate their errors. Whether we have succeeded in making this translation clear and understandable is up to you to decide. We are open to any criticism or comments, both positive and negative.

We have used the official Pinyin romanization to write all the Chinese words, thus in the Wade-Giles system Yiquan would be Yi-Ch'üan or I-Ch'üan, Guo Yunshen would be Kuo Yün-Shen, Xingyiquan would be Hsing-Yi-Ch'üan or Hsing-I-Ch'üan, Damo would be Ta-Mo and so on. We have made exception to this rule only with certain words, like Tao (Dao in pinyin), Zen (Chan in pinyin), etc., which have become a parts of the English language on their own.

We hope that this writing will be of great help to you.

Sincerely,

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March 24th, 2001

Author's Preface

The way of combat is very difficult to express in words. ‘The Book of Songs’¹ tells about boxing and ‘The Book of Rites’ about wrestling, both being at the origins of the martial arts. During the Han dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD), Hua Tuo created the Five Animals Play, which captured the essence of combat. But there was a lack of practitioners, thus we do not hear of it anymore. In the Liang dynasty (502 - 557 AD), Damo² came to the East, and in addition to preaching sermons to his students, he also taught the art of training the physique, which took the strong points of the spirits of the birds and beasts and combined them with the methods of developing the marrow and changing the muscles and tendons. Thus Yiquan (mind boxing), also known as Xinyiquan (heart and mind boxing) was created. The disciples and followers who were well versed in this art were numerous, thus Shaolin's fame spread greatly. Later Yue Fei³ gathered the quintessence of the various sects and combined them into the Five Skills Combined Boxing, sanshou (free combat), liaoshou (grappling and wrestling), etc. and called it Xingyiquan (form and mind boxing). Later, when the country was stable and peaceful, the general mood gradually changed to appreciate learning and the civil arts, while everything martial was looked down upon. Most of the boxing experts skilled in combat brought themselves to ruin because of their bellicosity, so the scholar-bureaucrats started advising each other to avoid the martial artists, and thus the martial arts that contained profound academic theory could not carry on through the ages. A long time passed without any change in this situation. Even if there were some people who had the Tao⁴ and cherished its virtue, most of them had to hide their talents in the villages and they did not dare to be known for their martial arts. There is no doubt that this was a great pity for the students of later times. In the Qing era, the Dai brothers of the Taiyuan County were skilled in this art, but they only passed it on to Mr. Li Luoneng of the Shenxian County in Hebei province. Mr. Li Luoneng taught many students, and one to obtain his unique skills was Mr. Guo Yunshen from the same county. When teaching Xingyiquan to his

¹ The Book of Songs is one of the six classics of Chinese literature, the other five being: The Book of History, The Book of Rites, The Book of Music, The Book of Changes, and Autumn Annals.

² Damo: Chinese name for Boddhidharma, an Indian monk who brought Buddhism to China and founded the Shaolin temple. Damo is regarded as the founder of Zen Buddhism.

³ Yue Fei: A famous general who lived during the Song dynasty, of whom many stories exist but few facts are known.

⁴ Tao: A universal Law, or literally Way, above everything else, that forms the basis of the Taoist philosophy and plays an important role in the traditional Chinese way of thinking. Person having the Tao means a capable and sensible one who has realized the Tao.

students, Mr. Guo had zhanzhuang (pile standing) as the basis that the beginners started from. There were many who studied from Mr. Guo, but those who could completely undertake his teachings were very few. Mr. Guo even said that the unsuitable ones could not learn, and that the unsuitable ones could not be taught. I am from the same village as Mr. Guo, who was a relative of mine, and there emerged a close friendship between old and young, he also liked my sagacity, so he taught this great art to me earnestly and tirelessly even when he was already old and dying. The ancient public morals have not survived in modern times; most students are fond of bizarre things and do not realize that Truth can be found nowhere but in daily activities, and common people usually ignore it because it is so near. This substantiates the parlance "the Tao never avoids people, however people cause the Tao to avoid them." I do not look for fame unlike the people of modern times. They rush and desire things without seeking facts, and they pursue fame in vain. Those seeking money do not study or raise their own questions, but instead plagiarize unwholesome ancient writings, just using them as instruments to make a living. With those pages full of nonsense they intentionally become mysterious; first like a mirage which is a product of the imagination, then like high mountains and distant waters. Since these are neither related nor connected, even if the students are very diligent, they are still lost in a thick fog, not being able to differentiate true and false in the least bit. The common ignoramus still presumes that the Tao of a sage cannot be attained. Oh! When the people seeking money take charge of the way, how can the great Tao prosper? I ponder over and over late at night, deeply sighing again and again. Although I was not nimble by nature, furtively in my heart I loved the way of combat, and thus gained a direct guidance to the Truth. I have recorded most of the daily teachings of my teacher and compiled them into a book. These instructions shall benefit both myself and others, too. I do not dare to be selfish and I expect that people pursuing the same things as I, will gain the benefits of it, and this will not be published in vain. This is my preface.

18th Year of The Republic of China (September 1928)
Wang Yuseng⁵ of Shenxian County

⁵ During his life, Wang was known by several different names. His given name was Xiangzhai (in Chinese the surname always comes first) and at the age of twenty he, following the Chinese custom of the time, took a new name, Yuseng. He was also known as Nibao and during his later years he named himself "Old Man Contradiction".

Changing One's Strength with Zhanzhuang (Pile Standing)

To achieve wonders in the martial arts, one must have the changing of one's strength with zhanzhuang as the foundation and starting point. This means changing weak into strong and clumsy into nimble. Like a student of Zen, who starts with religious discipline, becomes skillful in quietude, has an insight, finds evidence of the fountainhead of one's spirit, comprehends the void and then finally reaches the highest achievement; only then can one learn the Tao. What Zen is, the martial arts are as well. When one starts to study, the methods of zhanzhuang are rather numerous, for example, xianglongzhuang ('subduing the dragon' zhuang), fuhuzhuang ('taming the tiger' zhuang), ziwuzhuang ('midnight-noon' zhuang), sancaizhuang ('Heaven, Earth, and Man' zhuang), etc. Now, get rid of the numerous and move towards simplicity, take the strong points of each zhuang (pile) and combine them into one, namely hunyuanzhuang⁶. It is good for developing strength, convenient for actual fighting, contains the essence of striking and defending, and is connected to the study of qi⁷. After training for ten days the student will get results naturally. Written words cannot express its marvel. What must be avoided the most during the study of zhanzhuang is the use of force⁸ with the body and mind. Using force makes the qi sluggish; when the qi is sluggish, then the mind⁹ stops; when the mind stops, then the spirit¹⁰ breaks; and this breaking of the spirit leads to foolishness. What one should avoid as well, is raising the head or bowing forward, bending the elbows and legs too much, or keeping them too straight; they should always seem bent but not bent, seem straight but not straight, and the muscles and joints should be stretched. The head should be upright, the sacrum and the spine should be straight, the qi should sink, and the mind should be calm. The tips of the fingers and toes slightly use force, the teeth seem closed yet not closed, the tongue is seemingly rolled up yet not rolled up, all over the body the pores seem relaxed but not relaxed, and thus the

⁶ Hunyuanzhuang: "Perfect Circularity Pile". Perfect circularity means something not limited to any form or space, it does not refer to a certain fixed posture.

⁷ Qi has many meanings and cannot be really explained by words. It is like black, you can see its manifestations everywhere (black things), but you never see the black itself. Like black, one cannot say that qi itself really exists, but on the other hand, one cannot say it does not exist either, it is beyond existence and non-existence. Sometimes qi also has meanings such as air, breath, vigour, spirit, etc. It cannot be understood by reading even a book full of explanations, but only by intuitive perception. It does not, however, mean some mystical energy that can knock down the opponents from a distance or by the touch of a hand.

⁸ Using force here refers to using the one-sided clumsy strength of an untrained person, it does not mean that the muscles are not used (they are not used consciously though, only unconsciously).

⁹ Mind refers to the consciousness.

¹⁰ Spirit refers to the deep subconsciousness, or sometimes to the soul.

internal power is issued outward and the weak points are changed into great power. It is not difficult to grasp its essentials.

Training the Muscles, the Tendons, and the Bones

Force is produced by the bones and increased by the muscles and tendons. When the muscles and tendons are long, the force is big; when the bones are heavy the muscles and tendons are agile. The muscles and tendons stretch and the bones must shrink¹¹, when the bones are agile, then the strength is solid. Stretch the tendons and muscles of the wrists, of the ankles, and of the neck to let all the muscles and tendons stretch. Prop up the head and close the teeth. The heels contain strength (they have spring-like destructive force), the six centres are parallel (the centres of the palms, the centres of the feet, the centre of the body, and the centre of the crown of the head), the chest and the back should be round (the broad muscles of the back are extremely powerful), and then the qi develops naturally. The upper arms unfurl sideways and must be on the same level. One can use closing and opening, extending and contracting strengths. The two legs use lifting, holding, pulling down, contracting, wading, exploding, twisting, or wrapping strength. The shoulders unfurl and the hips sink, the sacrum is straight and the spirit concentrates on the crown of the head, and the qi passes through the three barriers¹² permeating into Wangong¹³. The bones are heavy like a bow, the muscles and tendons stretch like the bowstring, the strength is like the fully stretched bowstring, and the hands are sent out like the arrows. Exert strength that is like the reeling of raw silk, both hands are as if they were tearing cotton. The wrists and the ankles straighten and the strength becomes solid naturally. Sink the qi and close the teeth, and the bones become strong naturally. In appearance be like a dragon squatting, a tiger sitting, an eagle staring, have the spirit of an ape, move like a cat, be like a horse running, step like a chicken, twist your body like a snake, examine these strengths deeply. Straighten the waist and sink the qi, lower the hips as if sitting down and raise the knees. Prop up and intercept, wrap around and weigh down the opponent; when coming into contact, stick, change and follow the opponent. If you can attain that, then, when you meet the enemy, you will naturally move

¹¹ When writing this book, Wang Xiangzhai used traditional Chinese expressions for physiological things, thus the muscles and tendons stretching and bones shrinking describes the feeling he had when the extensors lengthened and the flexors shortened, which creates the feeling of tightness around the bones.

¹² The three barriers: Weilüguan at the sacrum, jiajiguan on the back between the two bladebones and yuzhengguan on the occiput in the head.

¹³ Wangong: a point inside the head, in the centre of the brains. Also known as the "upper dantian".

randomly in accord with the situation, changing infinitely. Even if your enemy is a mighty man of great strength, just moving a single finger can push aside five hundred kilos. The body is like a flatcar¹⁴, the waist is like a cartwheel, the qi is like gunpowder, and the fists are like bullets, a slight brainwave and even a bird cannot fly away. Be cautious but bold, have a friendly look on your face but be cruel in your mind. In stillness be like a scholar, in action be like a dragon or a tiger, always changing between substantial and insubstantial, never being fixed. Using this changing without a trace as the norm, you can naturally attain the marvelous skill of being able to change at will without any rules. So Master Guo Yunshen often said that having a fixed form and fixed thoughts are all false. Skills reaching the level of ‘no-mind’¹⁵ are getting rare because of this.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

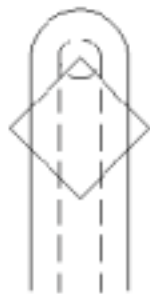


Fig. 3

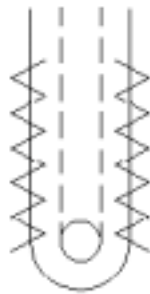


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

¹⁴ Flatcar: Railway wagon without sides or top.

¹⁵ No-mind is a Zen term and completely beyond a short explanation, or actually beyond any explanation. One can have some idea of it if one understands the meaning behind the words of the parables describing it though, thus for more information we recommend these books: "The Sutra of Hui Neng" (Hui Neng was the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism) of which several English translations exist, and "The Zen Doctrine of No-mind" by Daisetsu Suzuki.

Exerting Strength

The wonders of boxing attach great importance to having strength. The method of exerting strength is nothing beyond hard and soft, straight and round. Hardness is linear, softness is agile. Linear extending has offensive and defensive strength, while soft contracting has shocking explosive strength. Hard strength is straight in form (see figure one). Soft strength is straight outside, but round inside (see figure two). Extending and contracting, rising and falling, long and short are all used alternatively, hard and soft mutually assist each other, sometimes the left is hard and the right is soft, sometimes the left is soft and the right is hard, sometimes the limbs are hard, but the torso is soft, also, sometimes there is the wonderful exchange between hard and soft according to actual conditions, and the profound use of moderate hardness. Sometimes the soft retreats and the hard advances, and sometimes the hard retreats and the soft advances. When meeting emptiness use softness followed by hardness, when facing solid use hardness after softness, but what is of paramount importance is the moving line of the whole body not being broken. In unfurling sideways, opening, and issuing the hands out, the moving line of the whole body is straight. Lifting and holding all contain strength, so the vigour lays hidden inside, ready to erupt at any time, thus it is called round¹⁶. So the muscles issue the strength and the bones produce the edge. Every time you thrust your hand forward, use the way of raising, pausing, maintaining, holding, surrounding, weighing down, boring, or wrapping, and strength operating in contrary directions, producing round with straight (see figure three). When the hands make contact with the opponent, attach, stick, and follow, producing straight with round (see figure four). With round strength you can shake off and lift the opponent and with straight strength you can strike in an explosive way, opening and closing follow each other (see figure five). Be like myriad threads of soft silk twisted around each other, other people cannot fathom you, but you are exquisite and confident, like a fine colt jumping over a ravine, inclining its head and neighing loudly, the spirit beautifully glowing, the qi is strong and luxuriant, and the mind being stable inside. Be as if facing a formidable enemy; although you are surrounded by a forest of swords and halberds and a mountain of sabres and axes, you are still as if there were no one else present. The body is like a strong bow or a forceful crossbow, hands like arrows of the fully stretched bow. Thrust the hands suddenly like a snake catching its meal, hit the

¹⁶ Round here does not refer to circular. It is rather like a bridge, where every part must be equally strong, if any part of it were weaker it would lead to the whole bridge collapsing. Round here, and in many other places too, means "all pervading".

enemy like a thunderbolt. The way of exerting strength should not be excessively hard, because excessively hard breaks easily, it should not be excessively soft either, as excessively soft cannot advance. You must enter with straight strength with one side in front, with sidelong strength you can lead the opponent in and then send him out, or redirect him; this kind of method of exerting strength cannot be gained without intuitive perception. If one practises hard and becomes skillful, then the strength will be round, the movements of the body will be straight, the qi will calm, and the spirit can be whole, this all happening naturally. The students should not be lazy.

In the method of seeking strength, slow excels over quick, one should rather be relaxed than impatient, and most important of all is to not use clumsy strength. When exercising, you must let nature lead the course of all the joints of the whole body, do not have even the slightest sluggish place. The bones must be agile, the muscles and tendons must stretch, the flesh must be at ease, and the blood must flow freely like a spring that brings the water to a well. Only in this way can one learn the way of the whole body and the all-pervading strength, and the innate strength will not outflow. If you anxiously pursue the forms of movement and boxing routines as your exercise, vainly pursuing the beauty of swift and rapid movements by force, then the pores of your whole body will be obstructed, and it will lead to the blood circulation being blocked. Watch the people who use impatient rough force and you will notice that all of them without exception bulge their eyes and frown, stamp the ground with their feet loudly, stop breathing first, and only then use their strength, and after they have finished you can hear the sound of a long sigh, a sigh caused by inhaling through the mouth. They hardly realize that they have already greatly harmed their vitality. Sometimes they have put in several decades of pure exercise, but they are still laymen in the end. Discerning that this is always the case, would that not be caused by the use of the clumsy strength? Some people also work hard for one hundred days and achieve astonishing results, from that you can see how the wrong way greatly harms people. The students must consider this method of seeking strength carefully, one can realize the essence of nature naturally, but still, a mediocre person cannot attain the Tao.

Training the Qi

Confucius cultivated the character and trained the qi in order to be able to govern. Xianyuan¹⁷ trained the spirit and promoted the flow of qi in order to

¹⁷ Xianyuan: An ancient legendary leader of the Chinese nation.

live happily with the Tao. Damo meditated, came to the East to preach, started teaching the method of developing the marrow and changing the muscles and tendons, and thus created Yiquan and longhuzhuang ('dragon and tiger' zhuang), and was a founder of the martial arts. From ancient times, among the famous great Confucians, the great sages, and Buddha's warrior attendants, there is no one who did not cultivate the temperament, train the qi, or practise martial arts. Zhuangzi¹⁸ said: Martial arts indeed enter the Tao. Although the martial arts are just a small Tao, people can hardly realize that its academic theory is endless. Of all those who study these arts, only those who have a natural and unaffected mighty spirit and lack the qi of frivolity and arrogance towards worldly affairs, can be compared to the sages and the famous Confucians and thus are worthy to learn these arts. The art of training the qi has circulation and control of qi as the results, long exhaling and short inhaling through the nose as the exercise, unceasing flow of the qi as the gist, hearing¹⁹ the qi, quietude, and void as the ultimate attainment. The front is the way of food qi to go in and come out, the backside is the way of the kidney qi to ascent and descent. This is the skill of postnatal nourishing of the congenital, namely the turning wheel of the heavenly circle. At the beginning of the study of the heavenly circle, lead in clean qi through the nostrils, directly entering the sea of qi²⁰, and through the sea of qi permeate into the sacrum and circle at the waist — the two kidneys rest within the waist, truly being the first of the congenital, serving as the springhead of all the viscera, and thus causing the kidney fluids to be sufficient. Next lead the qi to rise to the Du channel and continue to Wangong, then going back to the nose. Guide the kidney qi down with the tongue, and the lower abdomen will strengthen, little by little it will bear fruit. This is the be-all and end-all of the heavenly circle, thus called the secret of the heavenly circle. Students, please do not take this lightly.

Nourishing the Qi

Although nourishing and training the qi originate from the same fountainhead of qi, yet the study of the stillness and movement of one's nature and life, and the skills of formness and formlessness each have their differences. The art of nourishing the qi does not diverge from one's nature, the art of training the qi does not diverge from one's life, the spirit is namely one's nature, the qi is namely one's life, so nourishing the qi must start from considering one's

¹⁸ Zhuangzi: A great Taoist philosopher of the ancient times.

¹⁹ Hearing here does not refer to sensing with the ears, but to an intuitive perception.

²⁰ The sea of qi (qihai in Chinese): in the lower abdomen.

primordial nature. The Tao of one's nature and life cannot be expressed in words. Moreover, the Tao is beyond words, what can be expressed in words is not the Tao. Thus Mencius said: Difficult to say. Nowadays what is difficult to say is said by force, but one's nature and the Tao are void. Voidness is the fountainhead of heaven and earth, and origin of the myriad things. People have birth and death, and things get broken, but the Tao exists forever. It is large without an outside, it is small without an inside, look at it and it has no shape, listen to it and it has no voice, but it can cover heaven and earth, fill the six harmonies, fill the cosmos, mix with and contain the universe; it is learning of nature and life, it is namely the yin and yang of heaven and earth. So when you want to nourish the qi and cultivate life you must calm your mind and spirit, for mind is the monarch fire and movement is the ministerial fire. When the monarch fire does not move, then the ministerial fire does not produce; when the ministerial fire does not produce, then the qi and thoughts will be quiet naturally; when there are no thoughts, then the spirit will be quiet; when the spirit is quiet, then the mind will be calm. Thus it is said: "All the germinating thoughts are like fire. When the myriad reasons are quiet, only then is Truth produced. Letting the qi be unobstructed leads to nimbleness, the anima will be full, and the spirit will live naturally." Movement comes from immobility and an act comes from inaction. When there is no action, then the spirit returns; when the spirit returns, then the myriad things become quiet; when the myriad things become quiet, then the qi vanishes; when the qi vanishes, then the myriad things will not produce, and the ears, eyes, mind, and thoughts are all forgotten, that is namely the sphere of all wonderment. Like facing circumstances but forgetting them at the same time; not being indulgent in the evil spirits of the six thieves²¹; living in this world yet being detached from it and not being affected by the myriad changes. One can actually view the mind inside, mind without the mind; view the form outside, form without the form; view the things far away, things without the things; and completely realize the Secret (Samadhi) which is namely void, void without the void, the void is simply nothing and without nothing there is still nothing. Generally speaking, the human spirit is very clear but the mind disturbs it. Ordinarily, the human mind is calm but desires bring it into turmoil. Therefore, it is said that the spirit cannot leave one's nature and the qi cannot leave one's life. This is as accurate as the shadow following the body.

²¹ The six thieves mean the six sense organs, i.e. eyes (sight), ears (hearing), nose (smell), tongue (taste), body (touch), and mind (the ancient Chinese people considered mind as "the sixth sense"). The evil spirits are whatever is sensed by these organs.

Syncretism of the Five Elements

The five elements, the mothers of birth and destruction, are namely the source from which the myriad things emanate from. A common custom when speaking of the five elements is to say that: metal gives birth to water, water gives birth to wood, wood gives birth to fire, fire gives birth to earth, earth gives birth to metal, that is called mutual promotion; metal overcomes wood, wood overcomes earth, earth overcomes water, water overcomes fire, fire overcomes metal, that is called mutual restraint. This stale theory can hardly have anything to do with the principles of boxing, and the one who associates it with boxing has no idea of what combat really is. Again, saying that a certain technique gives birth to another technique, and a certain technique overcomes another technique seems rational, but if you research the principles of boxing, when two hands come into contact, how could you have time to consider it? If you first see it with your eyes, then think of it in your mind again, and then react, I dare not believe that it is possible. Moreover, the enemy's oncoming force often changes, how could one gain victory with the theory of mutual promotion and restraint? This theory of mutual promotion and restraint deceives and misleads people; it is extremely fallacious talk. Even if one can reach the level of not doing anything consciously, with the hand or the foot reaching the enemy even before one knows that one has struck, I still dare not believe that one could definitely subdue the enemy. One whose brain considers, mind thinks, and who talks about tricks, drills, and boxing routines, is just a layman and not qualified to talk about boxing. What are called the five elements in boxing skills are: the metal strength, the wood strength, the water strength, the fire strength, and the earth strength. Namely, all the bones and the muscles being hard like iron and rock, these are the characteristics of metal, thus called metal strength. That is the meaning of the skin and flesh being like cotton, the bones and the muscles being like steel. Of the four limbs and all the bones, none is unlike the bent and straight shape of a tree. That is the characteristic of wood, thus called wood strength. The actions of the body are like those of the divine dragon roaming in the sky or fierce snake swimming in the water. Just like the flow of water, moving in an unfixed way and lively and changing all the time, these are the characteristics belonging to water, and are thus called water strength. Sending out the hands like the explosions of bombs, movements as sudden as if the body were burning, like fierce thunder, these are all characteristics of fire, and are thus called fire strength. The whole body is round, thick, heavy and solid; the mind is heavy like high mountains; there is no place where the ability does not show. These are the characteristics belonging to earth and are thus called earth

strength. Every action and every movement all have these five strengths, this is called syncretism of the five elements. In stillness the whole body has consistent strength, in movement all of the big and small joints always have the two contrary forces, upward and downward, forward and backward, or left and right, only then can one attain the hunyuan²² strength of the whole body.

Six Harmonies

The six harmonies can be divided into internal and external: the harmony of the heart and the mind, the harmony of the mind and the qi, and the harmony of the qi and the strength are the three internal harmonies; the harmony of the hands and the feet, the harmony of the elbows and the knees, and the harmony of the shoulders and the hips are the external harmonies. Also, the harmony of the muscles and the bones, the harmony of the teeth and the flesh, and the harmony of the lungs and the kidneys, are the three internal harmonies, while the harmony of the head and the hands, the harmony of the hands and the torso, and the harmony of the torso and the feet are the three external harmonies. Summed up, spirit in harmony, strength in harmony, the moving line of the body in harmony, all parts of the body in harmony, that is called harmony. No movement or posture being opposed to these harmonies, this is called harmony. Terrible indeed, the six harmonies harm people²³. Students, be careful! Be careful!

Formulas Put into Verse

Formulas put into verse contain the core of boxing. If one can see the meaning behind the words and follow up on their principle, one can gain excellent results naturally.

The mind is focused, the consciousness is not scattered, the anima is strong, the qi is tranquil, and the spirit is bright (these are the five great essentials).

Chaos passes throughout the whole body and the body tries to avoid falling apart by all means (the whole body uses strength, no part of it is not round; always assume the idea of round inside and straight outside). The fists strike like shooting stars, the hands change like lighting (changing rapidly, the spirit being nimble and determined).

²² Hunyuan literally means perfect circularity. In martial arts terms it means all pervading, hunyuan strength being strength that comes naturally without any conscious effort and can be issued from any part of the body, in any posture, and to any direction.

²³ If one will pay attention to the parts instead of the whole, one will be going to a wrong direction.

The tongue is rolled up and the teeth are closed (the tongue is the tip of the muscles, the muscles are the purse of qi; when the tongue is rolled up, then the qi goes down, pouring into the sea of qi, and moreover, it can guide the kidney qi to enter the Dantian²⁴; the teeth are the tips of the bones, when they are closed, then the bones are strong).

The top of the head is as if hanging from the sky (the head is the first of the six Yangs²⁵, the five sense organs and all the bones all originate from it; when this vertex is like suspended, then the qi can easily pass through the three barriers and nine orifices, the 'white clouds can naturally gather to the peak'²⁶ and a bit of miraculous brightness hangs from the vertex, this is also the basis of Zen).

The spirit shines brilliantly from the two eyes (the shine of the eyes shrinks and sharpens). Sense attentively by smelling and hearing and let mind watch inside (do the exercise of long exhale and short inhale through the nose; turn the ears, the eyes, and the mind over to watch and listen to the inside of yourself). The waist turns like a pulley. When you step forward, the legs are like steel or diamond (agile and lively, advance and get in, seizing for the centre of the opponent). Raise, wade, wrap, hold, contract, roll, file, pull, prop up, or wrench (all movement and stillness must have these strengths).

The fingers and the toes have grasping power, the pores are like they are producing electricity (the fingers are the tips of the muscles and tendons, when closed into a fist, then the strength becomes full naturally; the hairs all over the body are the tips of the blood, blood is the support of the qi; if the pores are not open and the hairs are not erect, then the blood cannot be sufficient; if the blood is not sufficient, then the qi cannot sink; if the qi cannot sink then the strength is not solid; if it is not solid then you will lose your combat effectiveness).

The Classical Method of the Hand-to-Hand Fighting

People are all different by nature, some are clever, some have transcendental wisdom, some have will power and perseverance, some are calm and steady, and even more people are deceitful and insidious. Being so different, their actions are also different and thus their methods of combat are different as well, some start with a fixed form, but they reach with formlessness. Going with a failing trend and coming with a scream. Myriad changes, beyond the limits of what can be narrated. You must work hard, purely, and earnestly, be

²⁴ Dantian: The pubic region, the inside of lower abdomen.

²⁵ The body is divided into yin and yang, the two contraries.

²⁶ The white clouds refer to the essential qi and the peak to the vertex.

courageous, and have the method everywhere. The spirit must be hidden inside every action. Do not expect anything to happen like this or like that. Defeat the opponent without even knowing you have defeated him. The body moves quickly like a horse, the hands move quickly like the wind. When practising, be as if you were facing a formidable enemy between three to seven chi²⁷ away from you. When engaged in a real hand-to-hand fight, be as if there were nobody else present. The neck must be erect, the waist should be straight, the lower abdomen should be substantial, the two humerus propped up, the crotch is drawn back so that the two legs protect the genitals, and the body is linked together from the head to the feet without a break. If one is timid and diffident, one cannot win. One who cannot carefully consider and watch the expression of the enemy cannot win either. To sum up, when the enemy does not move, I remain still, when the enemy moves slightly, I strike first. What is the core of combat is this striking first. In stillness be like a scholar, in movement be like a dragon or a tiger. Launch your attack like a swift thunder, as sudden as lightning. Only this way can one be victorious. There is nothing beyond movement and stillness; the time when the movement has started but not yet started is called the real movement. The hands must be agile, the feet must be light; advance, retreat, and turn like a cat. The body must be upright, the anima shines from the eyes, the hands and the feet reach the enemy together and one is determined to win. If the hands reach but the steps do not arrive, that is not a good hit. When the hands reach and steps also arrive, one can beat the opponent like cutting grass. On the upper part of the body hit the jaw or the throat and on the lower part hit the genitals. On the left and right sides hit at the centre of the ribs, punch from no farther away than one zhang²⁸ and no closer than one inch. The hands strike like huge cannons, the feet are like the roots of a tree. The eyes must be vicious and the hands must be evil. The feet step along the centre-line, drill into the enemy's centre of gravity seizing his position, then even a supernatural being cannot defend against you. When using the fists the strength must pass through the hands, when using the palms one must have qi. The upper and lower parts of the body are combined by the mind. Going in or out, the heart always guides, and the eyes, the hands, and the legs follow it. The two feet carry the weight of the body, forty per cent on the front leg and sixty per cent on the back leg, when issuing power the balance goes in reverse²⁹. Step with orientation and also step without orientation. For instance the front leg moves forward and the rear leg follows, thus front and back have a natural

²⁷ Chi: A traditional Chinese measure of length, equal to 0.333 metres.

²⁸ Zhang: A traditional Chinese measure of length, equal to 3.33 metres, or ten chi.

²⁹ When you issue power, the weight moves from the back leg to the front leg, sixty per cent being on the front leg and forty per cent being on the back leg.

orientation. A step forward becomes a back step, a step backwards becomes a step forward, and furthermore, a step forward becomes a front step backwards, a step backwards becomes an advancing back step, these are natural front and back steps without orientation. Left and right alternate like a tiger entering a mountain forest, avail yourself to the situation, be full of valour and vigour, and you will surely knock out your enemy. Hit the centre of the opponent head-on with a cutting fist, seize up and down like a tiger. The opponent has great trouble just like when encountering overturning rivers and upset seas, in the meanwhile you are at your leisure. Like a strong phoenix facing the sun, the clouds cover heaven and earth, the sun meets the moon, a fight contradictorily appears short yet long. The three stars³⁰ appear in contrast, the four limbs act simultaneously, the five elements are all issued out together, the six harmonies are tied together. Bravely advance forward, move up and down, left and right; advance, retreat, turn over, or change between having the left or the right side in front. When moving straight on, issue your strength, bravely go and do not return. When you are sideways, wrap your strength, open and close in a way that none can ward off. When moving up, raise your body, which will seem as if it were lifted up. When moving down, contract your body, which will seem as if it had the form of drilling and catching. When you have the opportunity to advance, move forward and destroy the opponent's body. When you have to retreat, move back and lead the qi of the opponent. Pay attention to the backside of your body, but do not feel that it is the rear, the back is then the front. As to left and right, pay attention to them, but do not feel that they are left and right. When the head and the hands advance, the body must advance as well, when the body and the hands arrive together, then the method is true. The inside must guide, the outside must follow, the punches must reach far, and the qi must destroy. The fists are like cannons, twist the body like a dragon, strike with absolute liberty; realize the meaning of this, which is as wonderful as magic. A snipe enters the forest and a swallow searches for water, the tiger catches a sheep mauling it like the mighty wind. To gain victory, all of the four limbs must be in harmony, if one still does not gain victory, one must be doubtful in one's heart. Look one way and row another way, point to the south and hit to the north, the upper part of the body is insubstantial and lower part is substantial; to understand this, you must perceive it by yourself. The left fist strikes out, the right fist hits, a single hand arrives and both hands come. The centre of the fist dashes onwards and hits the tip of the nose ahead. The nose is the centre, the source from which the myriad things emanate from. Breach the centre and the whole body will dissolve. The two hands united strike out head-

³⁰ The three stars mean the mind, the spirit, and the body.

on naturally blocking the five roads³¹. The body is like a crossbow and the fists are like bolts; you hear the sound of the bowstring and see a bird falling down, it all seems like a wonder. Meet the enemy as if your body were on fire and break him forcibly without any obstructions. What does hitting mean? What does defending mean? Defending is namely hitting, hitting is namely defending; every strike hits the target. The tactic changes all the time, move and turn using the spirit, being cruel in your heart is the best way, only with ruthless hands can you vanquish others. What does dodging mean? What does advancing mean? Advancing is namely dodging and dodging is namely advancing. There is no need to go far to search for beauty, it is within only one inch before your eyes. In stillness be like a virgin³² and in movement be like thunder. The shoulders burst with strength, qi passes through the centre of the palm, consciousness reaches out from the fingertips; the qi is delivered from the Dantian. Exert strength when you come into contact with the opponent, blow out the air and make a sound, intersect with the oncoming force of the enemy; the wind, the clouds, and the thunderstorms arrive simultaneously.

Dragon Method

There are six dragon methods, namely: dragon roars in the sea, dragon appears five times in the clouds, green dragon explores the sea, black dragon turns the rivers over, divine dragon roams in the sky, and divine dragon shrinks its bones. Their content is: being able to extend and contract, being able to be hard and be soft, being able to rise and fall, being able to hide and reveal. In stillness be like high mountains, in movement be like the wind and clouds; endless like heaven and earth, substantial like the emperor's treasury, noble spirit full like the four seas, shining like the three luminaries³³. Seek an opportunity when the opponent attacks and estimate the enemy's strong and weak points. Stand still waiting for the enemy to move, when the enemy moves remain calm. Advance as if retreating, retreat as if advancing; go straight and enter one side in front, enter in an oblique way and strike straight. Go softly and hit suddenly, come firmly and twist. Shrink the bones and come out, discharge strength and hit the enemy. Shrinking is namely issuing and discharging is also namely shrinking. Your nails are as if they were going to penetrate to the bone and then get into the marrow. When issuing strength the consciousness is within a few chi.

³¹ Blocking the five roads here means protecting the head, the throat, the chest, the abdomen and the genitals.

³² In ancient China unmarried girls stayed at home, and calmness and tranquillity were their virtues.

³³ The three luminaries: the sun, moon and stars.

Tiger Method

There are also six tiger methods, namely: fierce tiger leaves the forest, furious tiger suddenly roars, fierce tiger searches the mountain, hungry tiger tears its meal up, fierce tiger shakes its head, and fierce tiger jumps over a ravine. Grasp the tiger's natural disposition and intelligence, be forceful and strong, clash unexpectedly and attack directly, two claws toppling mountains. Advance suddenly and retreat suddenly, lose no time, like tearing the prey up, like shaking the head, just like a wildcat catching a rat. Use head butts and scratch with the claws, strike and swing using the whole body, raise the hands to strike like steel files. Use the way of cutting, raising, parrying, moving around the opponent, or following. Strike with a hand like a hooked pole. Use the way of cleaving, dragging, moving away, casting, propping up, sinking, holding, dividing, twisting, extending, contracting, raising or falling. Bump the enemy with your head, hit the enemy with your hands, destroy the enemy with your body, surpass the enemy with your steps, tread the enemy with your feet, compel the enemy with your spirit, and raid the enemy with your qi. It is easy to imitate a method but difficult to truly grasp it, grasping the method is still the best option. Those who are engaged in fighting should not think, those who think will find each inch difficult to walk³⁴. Let your mind make you advance, do not let it move you backwards³⁵. Just have the spirit but do not take the form, if you have the form you will certainly not win. Just be as vigorous as a dragon and as lively as a tiger; roar and the valleys will answer with an echo and the mountains will shake. Strong and heroic like the qi's³⁶ of dragon and tiger, when facing their enemies, they are not diffident at all, how could you not win then? To sum up, the dragon and tiger methods are changing all the time and have no fixed form. Have force like that of a tiger running three thousand li³⁷, and qi like that of a dragon flying ten thousand li. Strength breaks but the consciousness does not break, consciousness breaks but the spirit is connected. If pupils are not instructed orally and passed on the knowledge from heart to heart, they can never gain it; merely narrating its synopsis cannot express all its details.

³⁴ When you do something consciously you cannot do it well, thus in combat one should react by instinct without thinking anything.

³⁵ In other words, be courageous.

³⁶ Here qi means vigour.

³⁷ Li: A traditional Chinese measure of length, equal to 0.54 kilometres.

The Right Path of Yiquan

The right path of Yiquan is not beyond the old three fists and the dragon and tiger qi's. The dragon and tiger qi's mean ability, the three fists are for attacking. The three fists are the stamping fist, the drilling fist, and the wrapping fist. The stamping fist is externally hard but internally soft, and has static force (also called straight force), the centre of the body being insubstantial. It contains strength to be issued out. The drilling fist is soft outside and hard inside, like iron wrapped in cotton. It has explosive force, the centre of the body being substantial. It is used for passive counterattacking. The wrapping fist has hard and soft mutually assisting each other. It has sudden force, the centre of the body changing between insubstantial and substantial. It is used instinctively. No matter if the enemies differ in thousands of ways, defeat them at once. The so-called finding the centre means dealing with the infinitude.