

THE VOICES OF SUN LUTANG'S TEACHERS

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拳意述真

AUTHENTIC EXPLANATIONS OF MARTIAL ARTS CONCEPTS

孫福全

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拳意述真序

PREFACE [BY CHEN WEIMING]

孫祿堂先生以形意八卦太極拳術教授後學恐久而失其真也乃作拳意述真述先輩傳授之精意而加以發揮竣稿後命余序之三家之術其意本一大抵務勝人尚氣力者源失之濁不求勝于人神行機圓而人亦莫能勝之者其源則清清則技與道合先生是書皆合乎道之言也先生學形意拜李奎垣先生之門李之師為郭先生雲深而先生實學于郭從之最久幼棄其業隨之往來各省郭先生騎而馳先生手攬馬尾步追其後奔逸絕塵日嘗行百餘里至京師聞程先生廷華精八卦拳術董海川先生之徒也訪焉又絕受其術程先生贊先生敏捷過于人人亦樂授之蚤從郭暮依程如是精練者數年游行郡邑聞有藝者必造訪或不服與較而先生未嘗負之故郭程二先生贊曰此子真能不辱其師先生年五十餘居京師有郝先生為真者自廣平來郝善太極拳術又從問其意郝先生曰異哉吾一言而子通悟勝專習數十年者故先生融會三家而能得其精微筆之於書表章先輩開示後學明內家道藝無二之旨動靜交脩之法其理深矣其說俱備于書閱者自知之余因略述先生得道之由以見先生是書乃苦功經歷所得者非空言也

民國十二年歲次癸亥仲冬蘄水陳曾則序

After Sun Lutang had learned the boxing arts of Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji, he feared that with the passage of time their genuineness would be lost. Thus he has produced this book, relating the essential ideas of previous generations of teachers so as to give them free rein. After he completed the manuscript, he told me to write a preface for it.

These three boxing systems are fundamentally the same in concept. Most emphasize using strength to defeat an opponent, thereby corrupting their own essential source. But by not seeking to defeat your opponent, your spirit is in motion and the mechanics of your movement are rounded, rendering the opponent incapable of defeating you. Your source thus remains pure, and by being pure, your skill conforms with the Way. Indeed, Sun's books all conform with the messages of Daoism.

When he learned Xingyi, he did obeisance to Li Kuiyuan. Li's teacher was Guo Yunshen, and Sun's real learning is from Guo, for he followed him for the longest amount of time. When he was young, he abandoned his occupation and accompanied Guo around the provinces. When Guo rode his horse, he galloped. Sun grasped the

horse’s tail and chased after it, running so fast that no one could have caught up, daily covering more than thirty miles.

Arriving in Beijing, he heard that Cheng Tinghua, a student of Dong Haichuan, was excellent at the Bagua boxing art. He visited him and fully received his art. Cheng helped him become more agile than ordinary people and was pleased to instruct him.

What Sun had earlier learned from Guo and later learned from Cheng, he refined over several years. When he went on his own travels, his skill was heard of wherever he went, and he was inevitably paid visits. He never refused a challenge and was never defeated. Therefore Guo and Cheng both supported him by saying: “This is a student who is truly incapable of humiliating his teachers.”

Once he was over fifty years old, he made his home in the capital. Hao Weizhen had come from Guangping. He was an expert in Taiji Boxing, and while Sun was discussing with him about its concepts, Hao said: “How strange. I said one thing about it and you realized all, surpassing my concentrated practice of decades.”

Therefore Sun harmonized the three systems and was able to obtain their essence. He committed them to writing, honoring previous generations and inspiring later generations, peerless in his aim of illuminating the methods and skills of the internal school. As to their method of movement and stillness cultivating each other, the principles are deep. Their teachings are well-presented in the book so that readers will easily come to understand them.

I have briefly related how Sun obtained these methods. Making use of what you find in his book, hard work will then take you through to attaining them, and these will not be empty words.

– written by Chen Zengze [Weiming] of Qishui [in Hubei], Dec, 1923

[PREFACE BY WU XINGU]

祿堂先生既著形意八卦太極三書行世嘉惠後學厥功匪淺然猶懼不知者以拳術為禦侮之具僅憑血氣之勇也於是有拳意述真之作凡拳中之奧義闡發無遺平日所聞之諸先生輩者一一筆之於書使好拳術者由此而進於道焉俾武術之真義不致湮沒此先生之苦心也其以述真名者蓋本述而不作之意於此益見先生之謙德已

民國十二年歲次癸亥冬月吳心穀拜讀並識

Sun Lutang has authored three books on Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji for the benefit of new generations of students, and his skills are not superficial. However, he worries that those who do not understand them will use martial arts as a tool to resist invaders only by way of reckless courage.

Therefore he has made this book so that the profound ideas within these boxing arts may be fully elucidated. Recorded in this book are the ordinary things he heard from all these teachers from the older generation, one after another, so that those who love boxing arts can from this advance to the Way.

In order that the true meaning of martial arts not fall into oblivion, he has taken great pains. The reason the title contains “Authentic Explanations” is because the basic intention is to pass these things on without embellishment, which further demonstrates his modesty and virtue.

– respectfully written by Wu Xingu, Dec, 1923

AUTHOR’S PREFACE

夫道者。陰陽之根。萬物之體也。其道未發。懸於太虛之內。其道已發。流行於萬物之中。夫道一而已矣。在天曰命。在人曰性。在物曰理。在拳術曰內勁。所以內家拳術。有形意。八卦。太極。三派。形式不同。其極還虛之道則一也。易曰。一陰一陽之謂道。若偏陰偏陽皆謂之病。夫人之一生。飲食之不調。氣血之不和。精神之不振。皆陰陽不和之故也。故古人。創內家拳術。使人潛心玩味。以思其理。身體力行。以合其道。則能復其本來之性體。然吾國拳術。門派頗多。形式不一。運用亦異。畢生不能窮其數。歷世不能盡其法。余自幼年好習拳術。性與形意。八卦。太極。三派之拳術相近。研究五十餘年。得其概要。曾著形意八卦太極拳學已刊行世。今又以昔年所聞先輩之言。述之於書。俾學者得知其真意焉。三派拳術。形式不同。其理則同。用法不一。其制人之中心。而取勝於人者則一也。按一派拳術之中。諸位先生之言論形式。亦有不同者。蓋其運用。或有異耳。三派拳術之道。始於一理。中分為三派。末復合為一理。其一理者。三派亦各有所得也。形意拳之誠一也。八卦拳之萬法歸一也。太極拳之抱元守一也。古人云。天得一以清。地得一以寧。人得一以靈。得其一而萬事畢也。三派之理。皆是以虛無而始。以虛無而終。所以三派諸位先生所練拳術之道。能與釋儒道三家。誠中。虛中。空中之妙理。合而為一者也。余深恐諸位先生之苦心精詣。久而淹沒。故述之以公同好。惟自愧學術譴陋。無文。或未能發揮諸位先生之妙旨。望諸同志。隨時增補之。以發明其道可也。

民國十二年歲次癸亥直隸完縣孫福全序

The Way is the root source of the passive and active aspects, and is the essence of all things. When the Way was not yet expressed, it was suspended in the Void, and since the Way was expressed, it has been flowing within all things. [from *Mengzi*, chapter 3a:] “The Way is One, and that is all.” In Nature it is called “fate”. In people is called “nature”. In things it is called “principle”. In boxing arts it is called “internal power”, hence the “internal” schools of boxing arts, in which there are the three systems of Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji.

Their postures are different, but at their limit is the Way of returning to emptiness, and in this way they are the same. It says in the *Book of Changes* [Great Treatise, part 1]: “The Way is the passive AND the active.” To incline toward the passive OR the active is wrong. Throughout your life, if your eating and drinking are not regulated, your energy and blood not harmonized, or your essence and spirit not roused, all these will put your passive and active aspects out of balance as a result. Therefore people long ago created the internal schools of boxing arts to get you to concentrate and ponder upon the theory and to get your body’s movements to conform with the Way, thus enabling you to return to your original essence.

In our nation’s boxing arts, there are so many schools, and their postures and applications are so varied. In a whole lifetime, you would not be able to even count them all, and even if given all the time in the world, we would not be able to exhaustively examine their methodologies. When I was young, I was fond of practicing boxing arts, and my disposition is toward the three systems of Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji. I have studied for more than fifty years and have obtained their essentials. I have written books for each, which have already been published. Now I am also taking what I have been told over the years by previous generations of teachers and putting it all into a book so that students may obtain their authentic ideas.

The postures of the three boxing arts are different, but their theory is the same. Their applications may be different, yet they have controlling the opponent as their core, and so they defeat opponents in the same way. Within a single system of boxing, everyone’s explanations and postures are not identical, owing either to how they use them or just to differences from one person to another.

The methods of these three boxing systems begin with the principle of oneness, divide from there into the three distinct branches, then end up united again in the principle of oneness. Each of the three systems has its own way of oneness: Xingyi Boxing’s sincerity is a pure oneness, Bagua Boxing’s infinity of techniques is a returning to oneness, and Taiji Boxing’s embracing of original nature is a maintaining of oneness. It was said by

men long ago [Laozi – *Daodejing*, chapter 39 / *Zhuangzi*, chapter 12]: “The sky obtains oneness by being clear. The ground obtains oneness by being firm. Man obtains oneness by being smart.” / “Obtaining the One, all things are accomplished.” The principle of the three systems is always to begin in emptiness and to end in emptiness. Therefore the way the teachers of the three boxing arts practiced can be equivalent to the three schools of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism – with their special theories of sincerity, undifferentiation, and non-identity – merging to become one.

I deeply fear that all the effort those teachers put into perfecting these things will be wasted with the passing of time. Thus I transmit it to share with those who will appreciate it. However, I am ashamed of my own learning, how shallow, ignorant, and illiterate I am, and that I cannot give full expression to their wonderful ideas. It would be good if their methods can be further elaborated upon, and so I hope my comrades will make more information available as it comes to light.

– written by Sun Fuquan of Wan County, Hebei, 1923

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CHAPTER ONE: BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF XINGYI BOXING TEACHERS

[LI NENGRAN]

李先生諱飛羽。字能然。世稱老能先生。或曰洛能。洛農。老農。皆一音之轉也。直隸深縣人。經商於山西太谷。喜拳術。聞縣境。有戴龍邦先生者。善形意拳。往訪焉。覲面一見。言談舉止。均甚文雅。不似長武術者。心異之。辭去。他日倩人介紹。拜為門下。時先生年三十七歲也。自受教後。晝夜練習。二年之久。所學者。僅五行拳之一行。即劈拳。並半蹻連環拳耳。雖所學無多。而心中並不請益。誠心習練。日不間斷。是年龍邦先生之母。八十壽誕。先生前往拜祝。所至之賓客。非親友。即龍邦先生之門生。拜壽之後。會武術者。皆在壽堂練習。各盡其所學焉。惟先生只練拳蹻半。龍邦先生之母。性喜拳術。凡形意拳之道理。並形式。無所不曉。遂問先生。為何連環拳只練半蹻。先生答曰。僅學此耳。當命龍邦先生曰。此人學有二年之久。所教者甚少。看來到是忠誠樸實。可以將此道理。用心教授之。龍邦先生。本是孝子。又受老母面諭。乃盡其所得乎心者。而授之先生。先生精心練習。至四十七歲。學乃大成。於形意拳之道理。無微不至矣。每與人相較。無不隨心所欲。手到功成。當時名望甚著。北數省人皆知之。教授門生。郭雲深。劉奇蘭。白西園。李太和。車毅齋。宋世榮。諸先生等。於是先生名聲愈著。道理愈深。本境有某甲。武進士也。體力逾常人。兼善拳術。與先生素相善。而於先生之武術。則竊有不服。每蓄意相較。輒以相善之故。難於啟齒。一日會談一室。言笑一如平常。初不料某甲之蓄意相試。毫無防備之意。而某甲於先生行動時。乘其不意。竊於身後即捉住先生。用力舉起。及一伸手。而身體已騰空斜上。頭顱觸入頂棚之內。復行落下。兩足仍直立於地。未嘗傾跌。以邪術疑先生。先生告之曰。是非邪術也。蓋拳術上乘神化之功。有不見不聞之知覺。故神妙若此。非汝之所知也。時人遂稱先生曰。神拳李能

然。年八十餘歲。端坐椅上。一笑而逝。

Li Feiyu, called Nengran – over the generations called Laoneng, Luoneng, Luonong, or Laonong, all turnings upon a similar sound – was from Shen County, Hebei. He was a merchant in Taigu County, Shanxi. Fond of martial arts, he heard that in the next county there was a Dai Longbang who was an expert at Xingyi Boxing, and he went to visit him.

When he met him for the first time, Dai’s speech and deportment were very elegant and he did not seem like a top martial artist, but his heart was not in favor of accepting Li and so he declined him. Another day, a friend introduced him as a favor. Li then did obeisance to Dai and became his student at the age of thirty-seven.

Once he received the instruction, he practiced day and night. For a whole two years, all he had learned was one of the five elements techniques, namely the chopping technique, and half of the Continuous Boxing set. Although what he learned was not much, he was not of a mind to ask for more. He sincerely practiced every day without interruption.

That year was the eightieth birthday of Dai’s mother, and Dai went forward to honor her with his good wishes. The guests that had arrived were not relatives and friends, but were Dai’s students. After she had been congratulated on her birthday, he gathered the martial artists and they all practiced in the birthday hall, each going through everything they had learned, except that Li was only doing half of the Continuous Boxing set. Dai’s mother was fond of boxing arts, and she understood all the principles and postures of Xingyi Boxing. Finally she asked Dai why Li had only done half the set, and he answered: “He has only learned that much.”

“This man has been learning for two whole years and he has been taught very little. He looks like he has become sincere and honest. He can be given this method. Diligently teach it to him,” she commanded. Being a dutiful son, he received his mother’s instructions and then taught Li everything he knew.

Li painstakingly trained until he was forty-seven, and then his learning was complete, the Xingyi Boxing theory attained in every detail. Whenever he competed with others, he always did whatever he felt like and his technique succeeded. He was then highly renowned, known of throughout several northern provinces. His students were Guo Yunshen, Liu Qilan, Bai Xiyuan, Li Taihe, Che Yizhai, Song Shirong, and others. His reputation kept growing and his theory kept deepening.

In the same county was a certain man who came top in the imperial military exams. His body was strong and he was an extraordinary man, also an expert in boxing arts. With Li he was simple and friendly, but of Li’s martial art he was secretly unconvinced. He always wanted to challenge others, but when he was on such friendly terms, he was too shy to say so. One day they were conversing in a room, talking and laughing like everything was normal. But he began to decide to test Li after all, and with the intention of catching him totally unprepared.

When he acted, he took advantage of the unexpectedness of it, sneaking up behind Li to clutch him and forcefully lift him up. And as he extended a hand, his body was already soaring diagonally upward, his head went into the ceiling, and then he fell back down with both feet standing on the ground rather than falling down.

He suspected Li of sorcery, but Li informed him: “It’s not sorcery, it’s just that at the highest level the boxing art is a spiritual skill. As it is unperceived, it seems miraculous and beyond your comprehension.” From that point, his contemporaries dubbed him “Magic Boxing” Li Nengran.

He was more than eighty years old when he died. Sitting on a chair, he smiled and passed away.

[GUO YUNSHEN]

郭先生諱峪生。字雲深。直隸深縣馬莊人。幼年好習拳術。習之數年。無所得。後遇李能然先生。談及形意拳

術。形式極簡單。而道則深奧。先生甚愛慕之。能然先生。視先生有真誠之心。遂收為門下。口傳手授。先生得傳之後。心思會悟。身體力行。朝夕習練。數十年。能然先生。傳授手法二人對手之時。倏忽之間。身已跌出二丈餘。並不覺有所痛苦。只覺輕輕一划。遂飄然而去。先生既受能然先生。所教拳術三層之道理。以至於體用規矩法術之奧妙。並劍術刀槍之精巧。無所不至其極。常遊各省。與南北二派同道之人交接甚廣。閱歷頗多。亦嘗戲試其技。令有力壯者五人。各持木棍。以五棍之一端。頂於先生腹。五人將足立穩。將力使足。先生一鼓腹。而五壯年人。一齊騰身而起。跌坐於丈餘之外。又練虎形拳。身體一躍。至三丈外。先生所練之道理。腹極實。而心極虛。形式神氣沉重如泰山。而身體動作輕靈如飛鳥。所以先生遇有不測之事。只要耳聞目見無論何物。來的如何勇猛速快。隨時身體皆能避之。先生熟讀兵書。復善奇門。著有解說形意拳經。詳細明暢賜余收藏。後竟被人竊去。不知今藏何所。未能付梓流傳。致先生啟逮後學之心。湮沒不彰惜哉。先生懷抱絕技奇才。未遇其時。僅於北數省教授多人。後隱於鄉閭。至七十餘歲而終。

Guo Yusheng, called Yunshen, was from Ma Village, Shen County, Hebei. When he was young he was fond of practicing boxing arts. He trained for several years but got nothing out of it. Later he met Li Nengran and talked with him about the Xingyi boxing art. Its postures are very simple, yet its theory is profound. He adored it. Li saw he had a sincere heart and finally accepted him as his student, teaching him personally.

After Guo obtained the transmission, he contemplated its ideas until he understood them, and then his body acted according to them. Day and night he trained for more than ten years as Li passed on his techniques to him, so that when Guo drilled with a partner, he suddenly crowded the space and a body fell down more than twenty feet away. His partner felt no pain, only aware of a gentle flick, and Guo walked away with a swagger. Guo completed Li's instructional course through the three-levels theory, and he achieved in form and function a profound standard of technical skill, as well as great skill in the arts of sword, saber, and spear, all of which he become quite perfect in.

He often traveled to various provinces, broadening his associations with people in both northern and southern styles who were of similar thinking, and he had many experiences. He once exhibited a test of his skill, calling for five strong men all at once to each hold a wooden staff and to press their points into his belly. The five men made their stances stable and pressed from their feet, then with a single bulge of his belly, all five of them shot upwards in unison and fell on their butts more than ten feet away. Also, when he practiced the tiger form, his body leapt beyond thirty feet.

The principle that he trained was for his belly to be completely solid but his mind be completely empty. His posture's manner was as heavy as Mt. Tai, yet his body's movement was as light as a flying bird. Therefore if ever he happened to be caught up in some incident by surprise, you only heard about it if you saw it for yourself, whatever it was, since when it happened he was so fierce and fast that at any time his body could evade it.

He was well-versed in military literature and was also an expert in unorthodox tactics. He wrote *Explaining the Xingyi Boxing Classics* with detail and clarity. It was given to me to treasure but was later unexpectedly stolen by someone. I do not know nowadays where it is and I am unable to send it to the publishers so it can be spread for the enlightening of later students. It has disappeared without trace, and this is a tragedy. [It seems possible that much of Sun's motivation for making this book, which concentrates most of all on Guo's teachings, was to make amends for losing that one.] His cherished skills and talents have not made it to today, and of the many people who have received his teachings, they are only in a few northern provinces.

He later shrugged off town life and lived in his native neighborhood. He was more than 70 years old when he died.

[LIU QILAN]

劉先生。字奇蘭。直隸深縣人。喜拳術。拜李能然先生為師。學習形意拳術。先生隱居田廬。教授門徒。聯絡各派。無門戶之見。有初見先生。數言即拜服為弟子者。先生至七十餘歲而終。弟子中。以李存義。耿誠信。周明泰。三先生。藝術為最。其子殿臣。著形意拳抉微。發明先生之道。

Liu Qilan was from Shen County, Hebei. Fond of boxing arts, he did obeisance to Li Nengran and learned the art of Xingyi Boxing. Liu shrugged off town life and lived in a farmhouse, and there he taught students. He associated with the various styles without being biased toward his own, and when martial artists met him for the first time, he would [defuse the need for a challenge] by immediately voicing much admiration for their students.

He was more than seventy years old when he died. Among his students, Li Cunyi, Geng Chengxin, Zhou Mingtai were the three most skilled. His son, Dianchen, wrote *Selected Subtleties of Xingyi Boxing*, which elaborates upon his method.

[SONG SHIRONG]

宋世榮先生。宛平人喜。崑曲。圍棋。性又好拳術。在山西太谷開設鐘表鋪。聞李能然先生。拳術高超。名冠當時。託人引見拜為門下。自受教後。晝夜勤苦習練。迄不間斷。所學五行拳。及十二形。無不各盡其妙。練習十二形中。蛇形之時。能盡蛇之性能。回身向左轉時。右手能攝住右足跟。及向右轉時。左手能攝住左足跟。回身停式。身形宛如蛇盤一團。開步走蹀。身形委曲灣轉。又如蛇之撥草蜿蜒而行也。練燕形之時。身子挨着地。能在板凳下邊。一掠而過。出去一丈餘遠。此式之名。即叫燕子抄水。又練狸貓上樹。此係拳中一着之名目身子往上一躍。手足平貼於牆。能粘一二分鐘時。當時同門同道及門外之人。見者固極多。現時曾親覩先生所練各式之技能者。亦復甚夥。蓋先生格物之功甚深。能各盡其性故其傳神也。若此昔伶人某。與先生相識。云在歸化城時。親見先生。與一練技者。比較。二人相離丈餘。練技者挺身一縱。甫一出手。其身已如箭之速。跌出兩丈有餘。而先生則毫無動轉。只見兩手於練技者之身。一划耳。余二十餘歲時。住於北京。小席兒胡同。白西園先生處。伶人某與白先生對門居。聞其向白先生言如此。民國十二年一月間。同門人某。往太谷。拜見先生先。生時年八十餘歲矣。精神健壯。身體靈動。一如當年。歸後告於予曰。先生談及拳術時。仍復眉飛色舞。口言其理。身比其形。殊忘其身為耄耋翁。且歎後進健者之不如焉。

Song Shirong is from Wanping County [in Beijing]. He delights in hearing Kunqu opera and in playing encirclement chess, and also adores martial arts. In Taigu County, Shanxi, he opened a clockmaker's shop. He heard Li Nengran was superb at boxing arts, considered at that time to be the best. He begged someone to introduce him, then did obeisance to Li and became his student. Ever since Song received instruction, he has trained hard day and night without interruption up to this day. What he learned was the techniques of the five elements and twelve animals, learning the subtleties of each to their fullest extent.

When practicing the snake technique, he can do it exactly like a snake. When twisting his torso to the left, his right hand can absorb to his right heel, and when twisting his torso to the right, his left hand can absorb to his left heel. When turning around and pausing in the posture, his body is just like a snake coiling into a ball. While striding through the movements, his body winds and turns like a snake wriggling through the grass.

When imitating the swallow, his body gets so close to the ground, he can slip through under a stool and come out more than ten feet away. The name of this posture is SWALLOW TAKES UP WATER. He also practices LEOPARD CLIMBS THE TREE (These relate to the individual techniques within the boxing art.), in which his body leaps up, his hands and feet both sticking to the wall, and he stays for a second or two. Such moments have been frequently witnessed, by his Xingyi colleagues and by practitioners from other systems. Nowadays there are a great many people who have seen with their own eyes his abilities in practicing the various postures. His study of the skills of the animals is so deep, he can in each fulfill its personality and thus transmit its spirit.

Long ago he was acquainted with a certain actor, who said: “While in Guihua [now called Hohhot in Inner Mongolia], I personally got to see him in competition with another. Both men were more than ten feet apart. The challenger extended his body and launched forward, shooting out a hand, but then the man’s body was already going away at the speed of an arrow and he fell down more than twenty feet away. Song had not moved at all except for a flick of his hands to the challenger’s body.” When I was in my early twenties, I had a stay in Beijing, at Bai Xiyuan’s house in Xiaoxi’er Alley. The actor and Bai lived opposite each other and I heard him tell this tale to Bai.

In Jan, 1923, a colleague of mine went to Taigu to do obeisance to Song, who is this year more than eighty years old. His spirit is as robust and his body as nimble as when he was in the prime of his life. When my colleague returned, he told me: “When Song talks about boxing arts, he is still enraptured. The theory that comes out of his mouth forms identically in his body. He has totally forgotten that his body is old, and his health does not seem to be declining at all.”

[CHE YIZHAI]

車先生。永宏。字毅齋。山西太谷縣人。家中小康。師李能然先生。學習拳術。先生自得道後。視富貴如浮雲。隱居田間。教授門徒甚多。能發明之道者。山西祁縣喬錦堂先生為最。先生樂道。始終如一。至八十餘歲而終。Che Yonghong, called Yizhai, was from a wealthy home in Taigu County, Shanxi. He learned boxing arts from Li Nengran. After he obtained the method, he looked upon wealth and rank as passing clouds.

He shrugged off town life and lived in the countryside, where he taught many students, and out of those able to expound upon his method, the best was Qiao Jintang of Qi County, Shanxi. Che found constant delight in Daoism. He was more than eighty years old when he died.

[ZHANG SHUDE]

張先生。字樹德。直隸祁州人。幼年好習武術。拜李能然先生為師。練拳並劍刀槍各術。合為一氣。以拳為劍。以劍為拳。所用之槍法極善。有來訪先生。比較槍法者。皆為先生所敗。先生隱居田間。教門徒頗多。門徒承先生之技術者。亦不乏人。先生至八十餘歲而終。

Zhang Shude was from Qi Prefecture, Hebei. When he was young he loved practicing martial arts, and did obeisance to Li Nengran for instruction. He trained in each of the arts of boxing, sword, saber, and spear, merging them into a single art, treating boxing as sword and sword as boxing, and his spear technique was superb. Visitors came to compete against his spear technique and they were all defeated by him.

He shrugged off town life and lived in the countryside, where he taught many students. There is now no lack of people carrying on his skills. He was more than eighty years old when he died.

[LIU XIAOLAN]

劉先生。字曉蘭。直隸河間縣人。為賈於易州西陵。性喜拳術。幼年練八極拳。工夫極純。後又拜李能然先生為師。研究形意拳術。教授門徒。直省最多。老來精神益壯。八十餘歲而終。

Liu Xiaolan was from Hejian County, Hebei. He was a merchant of the towns of Yizhou and Xiling. He delighted in martial arts and when he was young he trained in Baji Boxing, becoming very skilled. Later he did obeisance to Li Nengran for instruction and studied the art of Xingyi Boxing.

He taught a great many students in his home province. In his old age his spirit was increasingly robust. He was more than eighty years old when he died.

[LI JINGZHAI]

李先生。字鏡齋。直隸新安縣人。以孝廉歷任教授。性好拳術。年六十三拜李能然先生為師。與郭雲深先生相處最久。研究拳術。練至七十餘歲。頗得拳術之奧理。動作輕靈。仍如當年。先生云。至此方知拳術與儒學之道理。並行不悖。合而為一者也。先生壽至八十而終。

Li Jingzhai was from Xin'an County, Hebei. Because he was filial and upright, he was appointed as a professor. He loved boxing arts and in his sixty-third year he did obeisance to Li Nengran for instruction, spending the most of his time studying together with Guo Yunshen, training until he was past seventy years old.

He very much obtained the knack, his movement as light and nimble as one still in the prime of life, about which he said: "At this point I then understood that the principles of boxing arts and Confucian teachings are not exclusive to each other, but are in accord with each other." He died at the age of eighty.

[LI CUNYI]

李先生。名存義。字忠元。直隸深縣人。輕財好義。性喜拳術。幼年練習長短拳。後拜劉奇蘭先生之門。學形拳意術。習練數十年。為人保鏢。往來各省。途中遇盜賊。手持單刀對敵。賊不敢進。或聞先生之名。義氣過人。避首者。故人以單刀李稱之。民國元年。在天津創辦武士會。教授門徒。誨人不倦七十餘歲而終。

Li Cunyi, called Zhongyuan, was from Shen County, Hebei. He treated wealth lightly and gave weight to honor. He was fond of boxing arts, and when he was young he practiced both Long Boxing and Short Boxing. Later he did obeisance to become Liu Qilan's student and learned the art of Xingyi Boxing, training for more than ten years.

He became a bodyguard and went all over the provinces. Once when he encountered thieves in his path, he faced them with a single saber in his hand and they did not dare advance. Maybe they had heard of his reputation, for his spirit of righteousness conquered them and they avoided facing him altogether. Therefore people called him "Single Saber" Li.

In 1912, he established the Warriors' Association in Tianjin, where he taught students and never tired of teaching. He was more than seventy years old when he died.

[TIAN JINGJIE]

田先生。字靜傑。直隸饒陽縣人。性好拳術。拜劉奇蘭先生為師。先生保鏢護院多年。生平所遇奇事甚多。惜余不能記憶。故未能述之。先生七十餘歲。在田間朝夕運動。以樂晚年。

Tian Jingjie is from Raoyang County, Hebei. He loves martial arts and did obeisance to Liu Qilan for instruction. He worked as a bodyguard for many years. Throughout his life he has encountered many strange incidents, but unfortunately I cannot recall them and therefore cannot relate them.

He is over seventy years old and lives in the countryside, exercising daily to delight himself in his old age.

[LI KUIYUAN]

李先生。諱殿英。字奎垣。直隸涞水縣。山後店上村人。幼年讀書。善小楷。性喜拳術。從易州許某學彈腿八極等拳。工夫極純熟。力量亦頗大。先生在壯年之時。保鏢護院。頗有名望。每好與人較技。時常勝人。後遇郭雲深先生。與之比較。先生善用腿。先生之腳方抬起。見雲深先生用手一划。先生身後有一板橙。先生之身體。從板橙越過去。兩丈餘遠。倒於地下矣。先生起而謝罪。遂拜為門下。侍奉雲深先生如父子然。後蒙雲深先生。教授數年。晝夜習練。將所受之道理。表裏精微。無所不至其極矣。余從先生受教時。先生之技術。未甚精妙。先

生自得道後。常為書記。不輕言拳術矣。余遂侍從郭雲深先生受教。先生雖不與人輕言拳術。而仍練拳不懈。他人所不知也。先生至七十餘歲而終。

Li Dianyng, called Kuiyuan, was from Laishui County, Hebei, from a village called Dianshang Behind-the-Mountains. When he was young he attended school and excelled in small-script calligraphy. He was fond of boxing arts and learned Tantui, Baji, and other styles from a man named Xu from Yi Prefecture. Li's skill became very refined and his strength very great.

When he was in the prime of life, he was a bodyguard for government facilities and became very well-known. He was always fond of competing with opponents and frequently won. Later he encountered Guo Yunshen in competition. Li was an expert at using his legs. He lifted up his foot to kick and noticed Guo make a mere stroke with his hand. Behind Li there was a wooden stool, and he went over it and fell to the ground more than ten feet away. He got up and apologized for any offense, then did obeisance and became Guo's student. He attended upon Guo as if they were father and son.

After meeting Guo, he learned from him for several years, training day and night. He received the theory and mastered it inside and out, complete in every detail, though when I received instruction from him, his skill was not yet so exquisite. After he obtained the method, he was often a clerk, but never discussed boxing arts casually. I was then attending upon Guo Yunshen and receiving instruction from him. Although Li did not talk about boxing arts with people, he still practiced his boxing without slackening, and other people did not even know it. He was more than seventy years old when he died.

[GENG CHENGXIN]

耿先生。名繼善。字誠信。直隸深縣人。喜拳術。拜劉奇蘭先生為師。學習形意拳。隱居田間。以道為樂。傳授門徒多人。七十餘歲。身體輕靈。健壯仍如當年。

Geng Jishan, called Chengxin, is from Shen County, Hebei. Fond of martial arts, he did obeisance to Liu Qilan for instruction and learned Xingyi Boxing.

He shrugged off town life and lives in the countryside, delighting in Daoism and passing on his skills to many students. Though he is now over seventy years old, his body is nimble and he is as robust as one in the prime of life.

[ZHOU MINGTAI]

周先生。字明泰。直隸饒陽縣人。幼年在劉奇蘭先生家。為書童。喜拳術。遂拜奇蘭先生為師。練習數載。保標多年。直隸鄭州一帶。門徒頗多。六十餘歲而終。

Zhou Mingtai was from Raoyang County, Hebei. When he was a boy, he was a personal servant in Liu Qilan's household. Being fond of martial arts, he did obeisance to Liu for instruction. He trained for several years and then was a bodyguard for many years.

In the region of Mo Prefecture, Hebei, are many of his students. He died above the age of sixty.

[XU ZHAN'AO]

許先生。名占鰲。字鵬程。直隸定縣人。家中小康。幼年讀書。善八法。性喜拳術。專聘教習。練習長拳刀槍劍術。身體輕靈。似飛鳥。知者皆以賽毛稱之。後又拜郭雲深先生為師。學習形意拳術。傳授門徒頗多。六十餘歲而終。

Xu Zhan'ao, called Pengcheng, was from a wealthy household in Ding County, Hebei. When he was young he

attended school and excelled at calligraphy. He was fond of martial arts, hired private instructors, and trained in the arts of Long Boxing, saber, spear, and sword. His body was as nimble as a flying bird, and those who knew him described him as “surpassing the feathered ones”.

Later he did obeisance to Guo Yunshen for instruction and learned the Xingyi boxing art. He taught many students and was above the age of sixty when he died.

第二章八卦拳家小傳

CHAPTER TWO: BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF BAGUA BOXING TEACHERS

[DONG HAICHUAN]

董海川先生。順天文安縣。朱家塢人。喜習武術。嘗涉迹江皖間。遇異人傳授。居三年。拳術劍術及各器械。無不造其極。歸後入睿王府當差。人多知其有奇技異能。投為門下受教者絡繹不絕。所教拳術。稱為八卦。其形式。皆是河圖洛書之數。其道體。俱是先天後天之理。其用法。乃八八六十四卦之變化而無窮。一部易理。先生方寸之間。體之無遺。是以先生行止坐臥。動作之際。其變化之神妙。非常人所能測也。居嘗跏趺靜坐。值夏日大雨牆忽傾倒。時先生跌坐於坑貼近此牆。先生並未開目。弟子在側者。見牆倒之時。急注視先生忽不見。而先生已跌坐。於他處之椅上。身上未着點塵。先生又嘗晝寢。時值深秋。弟子以被覆之。輕輕覆於先生身。不意被覆於床。存者僅床與被。而先生不見矣。驚而返顧。則先生端坐於臨牕之一椅。謂其人曰。何不言耶。使我一驚。蓋先生之靈機至是。已臻不見不聞。即可知覺之境。故臨不測之險。其變化之神妙。有如此者。中庸云。至誠之道。可以前知。即此義也。年八十餘歲。端坐而逝。弟子尹福。程廷華等。葬於東直門外。榛椒樹東北。紅橋大道旁。諸門弟子建碑。以誌其行焉。

Dong Haichuan was from Zhu Family Village, Wen'an County, Shuntian Prefecture [an old way to describe Beijing]. He delighted in practicing martial arts, and traveled as far as the other side of the Yangzte River in Anhui, where he gained instruction from a unique man. He stayed for three years, learning boxing arts, sword arts, and all kinds of weapons, attaining perfection in everything, and then he returned and entered into service as a manservant in Prince Rui's [Su's] residence. People often knew that he had rare abilities and were constantly prostrating themselves before him to receive instruction.

The boxing art he taught was known as Bagua ["Eight Trigrams"]. Its postures are all based on the numberings of the He River Diagram and the Luo River Document. Its essence is entirely the theory of the innate and the acquired. Its function is the eight by eight sixty-four hexagrams, changing without end, a part of the theory of the *Book of Changes*. Even down to an inch his form was without gap. Therefore whether he was walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, his transformations were magical, and he was extraordinary person to behold.

While sitting in cross-legged meditation on a stormy summer day, a wall suddenly collapsed. He was at that moment meditating in a depression in the ground next to it. Dong had not yet opened his eyes, but his student nearby had seen when the wall collapsed, and in the instant he looked to his teacher, he found Dong had suddenly disappeared and was already sitting cross-legged in a chair somewhere else, and that on his body there was no dust.

While he was taking a nap in late autumn, a student went to cover him up, gently covering his body, and unexpectedly he had covered the bed only and Dong had vanished. He was startled upon turning and seeing him sitting in a chair and looking out the window. It is said the student's words were: “No words can express my

surprise.”

At the magical level Dong had reached, he attained a condition in which he neither saw nor heard and yet was able to be aware. Thus when he happened upon danger, his adaptation to it was as miraculous as in these instances. It says in the *Zhong Yong*: “By the way of total sincerity, one can know what is about to happen.” This is exactly the idea.

He died over eighty years old, sitting up. His students – Yin Fu, Cheng Tinghua, and others – buried him beyond the east gate, by the hazel and pepper trees to the northeast, beside the Red Bridge Highway, and they had a stone tablet made, recording his deeds.

[CHENG TINGHUA]

程廷華先生。直隸深縣人。居北京花市大街四條。以眼鏡為業。性喜武術。未得門徑。後經人介紹拜董海川先生為師。所學之拳。名為遊身八卦連環掌。自受傳後。習練數年。得其精微。名聲大振。人稱之為眼鏡程。無人不知之也。同道之人。來比較者甚多。無不敗於先生之手者。因此招人之忌。一日晚先生由前門返鋪中。行至蘆草園。正走時。忽聞後有腳步聲甚急。先生方一回頭見尾隨之人。手使砍刀一把。光閃曜日。正望着先生之頭劈下。先生隨即將身往下一縮。倏忽越出七八尺。其刀落空。旋即回身。奪其刀以足踢倒於地。以刀擲之。曰朋友回家從用工夫。再來可也。不問彼之姓名。徜徉而去。當時有數人親眼見之。在京教授門徒頗多。其子海亭。亦足以發明先生技術之精奧者矣。

Cheng Tinghua was from Shen County, Hebei. He lived in Beijing, on Flower Market Street, and his profession was making spectacles. He was fond of martial arts but had no access to it until after an introduction to Dong Haichuan, to whom he did obeisance for instruction. The boxing he learned was called Continuous-Palms Swimming-Body Bagua. After receiving instruction, he practiced for many years, obtaining its refined subtleties, and became famous, known as “Spectacles” Cheng, and there was no one who had not heard of him. Many martial artists came to compete with him, but he defeated them all, and as a result – people quit challenging him.

One evening he was on his way back through the front gate of the city [beyond which his shop was situated], and as he was walking through Gourd Park, he suddenly heard behind him the sound of urgent footsteps. He turned his head and saw there was someone following him holding a large saber, eyes gleaming, looking to chop down at his head. He quickly shrank his body downward and leapt away seven or eight feet, the blade landing on nothing. Then he spun around, seized the saber, kicked the man to the ground, threw the saber away, and said: “Friend, go home, and after you have put some work into it, you can come back again.” He did not ask the other man’s name, but leisurely wandered away. There were on that occasion several people who had witnessed it.

In Beijing he taught many students. His son, Haiting, is also qualified to elaborate upon his profound skills.

第三章太極拳家小傳

CHAPTER THREE: BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF TAIJI BOXING TEACHERS

[YANG LUCHAN]

楊先生。字露蟬。直隸廣平府人。喜拳術。得河南懷慶府。陳家溝子之指授。遂以太極名于京師。來京教授弟子。故京師之太極拳術。皆先生所傳也。

Yang Luchan, was from Guangping Prefecture, Hebei. He was fond of boxing arts and obtained instruction from

a member of the Chen Family Village in Huaiqing Prefecture, Henan. Then he made Taiji famous all the way to Beijing and came to the capital to teach students. Therefore the Taiji Boxing in the capital all came from him.

[WU YUXIANG]

武先生。字禹讓。直隸廣平府人。往河南懷慶府。趙堡鎮。陳清平先生處。學習太極拳術。研究數十年。遇敵制勝。事蹟最多。郝為楨先生言之不詳。故未能述之

Wu Yurang [Yuxiang], was also from Guangping and also went to Huaiqing, but to the town of Zhaobao, where Chen Qingping lived, to train in the art of Taiji Boxing. He studied for more than ten years how to subdue opponents. He made very many achievements, which Hao Weizhen spoke of but not in great detail, and so I am in no position to relate them.

[HAO WEIZHEN]

郝先生。諱和。字為楨。直隸廣平永年縣人。受太極拳術於亦畚先生昔年訪友來北京。經友人介紹。與先生相識。見先生身體魁偉。容貌溫和。言皆中理。身體動止。和順自然余。與先生遂相投契。未幾先生患痢疾甚劇。因初次來京不久。朋友甚少。所識者。惟同鄉楊建候先生耳。余遂為先生請醫服藥。朝夕服侍。月餘而愈。先生呼余曰。吾二人本無至交。萍水相逢。如此相待實無可報。余曰此事先生不必在心。俗云四海之內皆朋友。況同道乎。先生云。我實心感。欲將我平生所學之拳術。傳與君願否。余曰恐求之不得耳。故請先生至家中。余朝夕受先生教授。數月得其大概。後先生返里。在本縣教授門徒頗多。先生壽七十有餘歲而終。其子月如能傳先生之術。門徒中精先生之武術者亦不少矣。

Hao He, called Weizhen, of Yongnian County in Guangping Prefecture, received the art of Taiji Boxing from Li Yiyu [the major student of Wu Yuxiang]. Many years ago he came to Beijing to visit a friend, and through that person’s introduction I made his acquaintance. I saw that he had an imposing stature, but with mild looks, reasonable speech, and his behavior was amiable and casual. I for one always got along well with him.

Before long, he contracted very severe dysentery. Since this was the first time he had come to the capital and had not been there long, he had so far made few friends. The only one who knew him was Yang Jianhou, who was from his hometown. I ordered medicine for him and attended to him day and night. After more than a month went by, he had recovered.

He cheered me and said: “Before we were not best friends, and we met by chance. For treating me as you have, there is really no way I can repay you.”

I said: “Sir, you don’t need to be concerned about this matter. As it is said: ‘All in the world are friends, especially those who think alike.’”

He said: “I am sincerely touched. If you wish of me what I have learned in boxing arts my whole life, I will teach it to you. How does that sound?”

I told him: “Well, forgive me, but that’s exactly what I hoped you’d say.”

And so I invited him to live in my house, and I day and night received what he taught. After several months I had obtained the general idea, and then he returned to his home.

In his home county, there are many followers of his teachings. He was more than seventy years old when he died. His son, Hao Yueru, can teach his art, and there are many skilled students under him as well.

CHAPTER FOUR: XINGYI BOXING

一則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 1

郭雲深先生云。形意拳術。有三層道理有。三步工夫。有三種練法。

The art of Xingyi Boxing has three stages of theory, three stages of skill, and three stages of training.

三層道理

The three stages of theory:

一練精化氣。二練氣化神。三練神還虛。練之以變化人之氣質復其本然之真也

1. Training essence and transforming it into energy.

2. Training energy and transforming it into spirit.

3. Training spirit and returning to emptiness.

(Such training transforms human temperament, returning you to your true nature.)

三步工夫

The three stages of skill:

一易骨。練之以築其基。以壯其體。骨體堅如鐵石。而形式氣質。威嚴狀似泰山。

一易筋。練之以騰其膜。以長其筋。俗云筋長力大其勁縱橫聯絡。生長而無窮也。

三洗髓。練之以清虛其內。以輕鬆其體。內中清虛之象神氣運用。圓活無滯。身體動轉。其輕如羽。（拳經云。

三回九轉是一式。即此意義也。）

1. Changing the bones:

The training builds up your foundation and strengthens your body. Your bones and body will be as hard as steel and rock, but your posture and temperament will be as dignified as Mt. Tai.

2. Changing the sinews:

The training stimulates your tissues and lengthens your sinews, (A common saying goes: “Long sinews means great power.”) [i.e. Greater flexibility leads to greater power.] Your strength is integrated in every way and will develop limitlessly.

3. Washing the marrow:

The training cleanses you internally and relaxes your body. The appearance of one internally cleansed is that the movement of spirit and energy is rounded and lively, without any stagnation, and the body’s movement is as agile as wings. It says in the Boxing Classics: “The three turnings up to the ninth repetition makes a complete process.” This is exactly the idea. [Guo will explain this statement further below in section C.]

三種練法

The three stages of training:

一明勁。練之總以規矩不可易。身體動轉要和順而不可乖戾。手足起落要整齊。而不可散乱。拳經云。方者以正其中。即此意也。

二暗勁。練之神氣要舒展而不可拘。運用圓通活潑而不可滯。拳經云圓者以應其外。即此意也。

三化勁。練之周身四肢動轉。起落進退皆不可着力。專以神意運用之。雖是神意運用。惟形式規矩仍如前二種不可改移。雖然周身動轉不着力。亦不能全不着力。總在神意之貫通耳。拳經云。三回九轉是一式。亦即此意義也。

1. Obvious energy:

When training, always go by an unchanging standard. The movements of your body should be smooth and must not be awkward. The lifting and dropping of your hands and feet should be orderly and must not be in confusion. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Squareness is your alignment with your center.” This is exactly the idea.

2. Hidden energy:

When training, your spirit and energy should be comfortable and must not be restricted. The exercise should be rounded and lively and must not be stagnant. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Roundness is how you respond outwardly.” This is exactly the idea.

3. Neutral energy:

When training, your whole body and each of your four limbs must never be moving and turning, lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating with effort, but should be wielded with concentration of spirit and intention. Although wielded with spirit and intention, yet the postural standards in the previous level are to be maintained and must not be changed. Although the movements of your whole body are to put forth no effort, they also cannot be entirely without strength, for always there should be spirit and intention coming through. Again the idea is that “the three turnings up to the ninth repetition makes a complete process”.

一節 明勁

A. OBVIOUS ENERGY

明勁者。即拳之剛勁也。易骨者即煉精化氣易骨之道也。因人身中先天之氣與後天之氣不合。體質不堅。故發明其道。大凡人之初。生性無不。善體無不。健根無不固。純是先天。以後知識一開。靈竅一閉。先後不合。陰陽不交。皆是後天血氣用事。故血氣盛行。正氣衰弱。以致身體筋骨不能健壯。故昔達摩大師。傳下易筋洗髓二經。習之以強壯人之身體。還其人之初生。本來面目。後宋岳武穆王。擴充二經之義。作為三經。易骨。易筋。洗髓也。將三經又制成拳術。發明此經道理之用。拳經云。靜為本體。動為作用。與古之五禽。八段。練法有體而無用者不同矣。因拳術。有無窮之妙用。故先有易骨易筋洗髓。陰陽混成。剛柔悉化。無聲無臭。虛空靈通之全體。所以有其虛空靈通之全體。方有神化不測之妙用。故因此拳是內外一氣。動靜一源。體用一道。所以靜為本體。動為作用也。因人為一小天地。無不與天地之理相合。惟是天地之陰陽變化皆有更易。人之一身。既與天地道理相合。身體虛弱。剛戾之氣。豈不能易乎。故更易之道。弱者易之強。柔者易之剛。悖者易之和。所以三經者。皆是變化人之氣質。以復其初也。易骨者。是拳中之明勁。練精化氣之道也。將人身中散亂之氣。收納於丹田之內。不偏不倚。和而不流。用九要之規模煅練。練至於六陽純全。剛健之至。即拳中上下相連。手足相顧。內外如一。至此拳中明勁之功盡。易骨之勁全。練精化氣之功亦畢矣。

The obvious energy is the boxing art’s hard energy. It is the method of refining the essence and transforming it into energy, and of “changing the bones”. If in your body the innate energy and the acquired energy are not combined, your physical constitution will not be strong. I will expound upon the method:

Generally speaking, a person is born with a good disposition and a healthy body, a firm grounding, and a purity which is innate. Then knowledge is opened up and intelligence closed off. Innate and acquired are not merged, the passive and active do not intersect, and what is always being applied to circumstances is acquired vigor. Thus even though your vigor may be flourishing, your real energy is weakened, with the result that your body is unable to be robustly healthy.

Therefore Damo long ago passed down to us the *Sinew Changing Classic* and the *Marrow Washing Classic*. Practicing by way of them will strengthen your body, returning you to your newborn state and your true self. Later in the Song Dynasty, Yue Fei expanded the ideas of the two classics and made them into three classics by

adding the *Bone Changing Classic*. The three classics complete the boxing art, which is why I mention their rationale.

It says in the Boxing Classics: “Stillness is the fundamental form. In movement lies the function.” This art is different from the ancient Five Animal Frolics and Eight Sections of Brocade, whose training methods have form but no function.

Since this boxing art has the subtlety of limitlessness, it therefore begins with changing the bones, changing the muscles, and washing the marrow, so that “the passive and active are blended together, and hardness and softness are fully transformed”, and you will have a silence and undetectability, an emptiness coursing through your whole body, from which you will then possess the wonder of being magically unpredictably.

And so it is that this boxing art is a single continuum of both internal and external. Movement and stillness have the same source. Form and function have the same method. Hence it is the case that “stillness is the fundamental form and in movement lies the function”. Because a person is a lesser universe, you conform in all respects with the greater universe, except that when the universe’s passive and active aspects change, everything is changed by it [as opposed to changes in yourself which would have only local effects].

The human body conforms to the principles of the universe, and so if the body is weak and its energy is obstructed, can this not be changed? The method of changing is that weakness is changed to strength, softness is changed to hardness, and contrariness is changed to harmoniousness. Therefore the three classics are all about transforming your temperament to return you to your original state.

Changing the bones corresponds to the obvious energy in the boxing. It is the method of training the essence and transforming it into energy. Gather the scattered energy in your body into your elixir field. When it does not wander off-center, there is harmonizing without wavering. Use the standard of the nine requirements to refine it. [The nine requirements are listed in Chapter Three of Sun’s 1917 Bagua manual: 1. sinking your waist, 2. hollowing your chest, 3. lifting your rectum, 4. pressing up your tongue, headtop, and hands, 5. wrapping your elbows in, 6. loosening your shoulders, 7. hanging your elbows down, 8. shoulders and hips shrinking in, 9. clearly distinguishing lifting, drilling, dropping, and overturning.]

Train it until the six active meridians are fully purified and you have attained robustness. Within the boxing art: “above and below coordinate with each other... Hands and feet look after each other... Inside and outside are as one.” Reaching this point within the boxing art, the skill of the obvious energy is complete, as is the task of changing the bones, and the work of training the essence and transforming it into energy has also been accomplished.

二節 暗勁

B. HIDDEN ENERGY

暗勁者。拳中之柔勁也柔勁與軟不同。軟中無力柔非無力也。即練氣化神易筋之道也。先練明勁而後練暗勁即丹道小周天止火再用大周天功夫之意。明勁停手。即小周天之沐浴也。暗勁手足停而未停。即大周天四正之沐浴也。拳中所用之勁。是將形氣神。神即意也合住。兩手往後用力拉回。（內中有縮力）其意如拔鋼絲兩手前後用勁。左手往前推。右手往回拉。或右手往前推。左手往回拉。其意如撕絲絛。又如兩手拉硬弓。要用力徐徐拉開之意。兩手或右手往外翻橫。左手往裏裏勁。或左手往外翻橫。右手往裏裏勁。如同練鼉形之兩手。或是練連環拳之包裹拳。拳經云。裏者如包裹之不露。兩手往前推勁。如同推有輪之重物。往前推不動之意。又似推動而不動之意。兩足用力。前足落地時。足根先着地。不可有聲。然後再滿足着地。所用之勁。如同手往前往下按物一般。後足用力蹬勁。如同邁大步過水溝之意。拳經云。脚打採意不落空。是前足。消息全憑後脚蹬。是後足。馬有躡蹄之功。皆是言兩足之意也。兩足進退。明勁暗勁。兩段之步法相同。惟是明勁則有聲。暗勁則無聲耳。

The hidden energy is the soft energy in the boxing. (Soft energy is different from weakness. In weakness there is no strength, but softness is not without strength.) It is the method of training the energy and transforming it into spirit, and of “changing the sinews”. To first train the obvious energy and then the hidden energy is the same idea as in elixirism in which the microcosmic breathing [breathing with the breath] “suppresses fire” and then the macrocosmic breathing [breathing with the whole body] is practiced.

With the obvious energy, your hands came to a halt, washed only by the microcosmic breathing. With the hidden energy, your hands and feet stop and yet do not stop, for they are washed by the macrocosmic breathing which expands in all directions. What happens when this energy is used in the boxing is that the shape, energy, and spirit (spirit meaning the intention) are merged.

When both hands put their energy into pulling back (inwardly having a contracting force), the intention is like pulling out a steel wire.

As for your hands putting their energy into one going forward and the other going back – when your left hand is pushing forward, your right hand is pulling back, and when your right hand is pushing forward, your left hand is pulling back – the intention is like tearing silk. It is also like your hands are drawing a stiff bow, for there should be an intention of putting energy into drawing it slowly.

When your right hand turns over and goes across outward, your left hand has an energy of wrapping inward, and when your left hand turns over and goes across outward, your right hand has an energy of wrapping inward – this is the same as when your hands are performing the alligator technique, or the wrapping technique in the Continuous Boxing set. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Wrapping is like binding up invisibly.”

When both hands put their energy into pushing forward, it is like pushing something heavy that is on wheels. There is an intention of pushing forward without moving it, or an intention of moving it but not moving it.

As for the energy of your feet, when your front foot comes down, the heel touches down first and must not make a sound, then the whole foot touches down, its energy like a hand going forward to push something down, while your rear foot’s energy goes into pressing, as if you were intent on taking a large step over a ditch. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Attacking with your foot, stomp with an intention of not coming down fruitlessly (applying to your front foot), its placement depending entirely on the pressing of your rear foot.” The act of a horse making a hoofprint is the intention of both feet.

When advancing and retreating, the footwork is the same for both the obvious energy and the hidden energy, except that it makes a sound in the case of the obvious energy and does not in the case of the hidden energy.

三節 化勁

C. NEUTRAL ENERGY

化勁者。即練神還虛。亦謂之洗髓之功夫也。是將暗勁練到至柔至順。謂之柔順之極處。暗勁之終也。丹經云陰陽混成。剛柔悉化。謂之丹熟。柔勁之終。是化勁之始也。所以再加向上工夫。用練神還虛。至形神俱杳。與道合真。以至於無聲無臭。謂之脫丹矣。拳經謂之拳無拳。意無意。無意之中。是真意。是謂之化勁。練神還虛。洗髓之工畢矣。化勁者。與練划勁不同。明勁暗勁。亦皆有划勁。划勁是兩手出入起落俱短。亦謂之短勁。如同手往着牆抓去。往下一划。手仍回在自己身上來。故謂之划勁。練化勁者。與前兩步工夫之形式無異。所用之勁不同耳。拳經云。三回九轉是一式。是此意也。三回者。練精化氣。練氣化神。練神還虛。即明勁暗勁化勁是也。三回者。明暗化勁是一式。九轉者。九轉純陽也。化至虛無。而還於純陽。是此理也。所練之時。將手足動作。順其前兩步之形式。皆不要用力。並非頑空不用力。周身內外。全用真意運用耳。手足動作。所用之力。有而若無。實而若虛。腹內之氣。所用亦不着意。亦非不着意。意在積蓄虛靈之神耳。呼吸似有似無。與丹道工夫。陽生至足。採取歸爐。封固停息。沐浴之時。呼吸相同。因此似有而無。皆是真息。是一神之妙用。也莊子

云。真人之呼吸以踵。即是此意。非閉氣也。用工練去。不要間斷。練到至虛。身無其身。心無其心。方是形神俱妙。與道合真之境。此時能與太虛同體矣。以後練虛合道。能至寂然不動。感而遂通。無入而不自得。無往而不得其道。無可無不可也。拳經云。固靈根而動心者。武藝也。養靈根而靜心者。修道也。所以形意拳術。與丹道合而為一者也。

Neutral energy has to do with training the spirit and returning to emptiness, and is also called the work of “washing the marrow”. It is when hidden energy is trained to the point that it becomes so soft and smooth that it is called “when softness and smoothness have reached their extreme”, which is the conclusion of the hidden energy. The *Elixir Book* says: “When the passive and active are blended together, and hardness and softness are fully transformed, it is said the elixir has been cooked.” At the finish of the soft energy is the beginning of the neutral energy.

With further work, you are training the spirit and returning to emptiness, until distinctions of body and spirit are both obscured and you have truly merged with the Way, reaching a point of silence and undetectability which is called “shedding the elixir”. It says in the Boxing Classics: “The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention.” This is the point at which the neutral energy, the training of the spirit and returning to emptiness, and the marrow washing have all been achieved.

The neutral energy is not the same as practicing the painting energy. [The characters for “neutral” and “painting” are pronounced identically (“hua”) and would therefore be easily confused.] Obvious energy and hidden energy both have painting energy. Painting energy is when your hands come and go, lifting and dropping, all within short ranges, and so it is also called “short energy”. It is like your hand reaches out to stroke a mark onto a wall, then withdraws again to your body, and so it is called “painting energy”. When training neutral energy, working the postures is the same as in the previous two stages, but the application of the energy is different.

The idea is as it says in the Boxing Classics: “The three turnings up to the ninth repetition makes a complete process.” The three turnings are: [1] Train the essence and transform it into energy. [2] Train the energy and transform it into spirit. [3] Train the spirit and return to emptiness. These correspond to the obvious energy, hidden energy, and neutral energy. The “three turnings” are the obvious energy, the hidden energy, and the neutral energy as a complete process. By “up to the ninth repetition” is meant doing it over and over again to purify the active aspect. The principle is to attain emptiness through these transformations and then there is a return of the pure active aspect.

When training, let the movements of your hands and feet be the same as when working the postures during the two previous stages. Always you should not use effort, but also you should not be idiotically vacuous about not using effort. [This seems to be a dig at those who, like a great many Taiji practitioners, get overly obsessed with the notion that you should use no effort at all. To actually use absolutely no effort at all means that you are lying on the ground drooling. The Xingyi mentality is a more balanced message that you simply should not use more effort than is necessary.] Your whole body, inside and out, is moving entirely by the use of true intention. The effort used in the movements of your hands and feet is something that is and yet seems not to be, is of substance but seems insubstantial. The energy in your body is employed but does not apply intention, and by not applying intention, the intention is then on the accumulating of naturalness of spirit.

The breathing seems to be yet seems not to be, and as with the elixirist practices, the active aspect generates perfect sufficiency. Think of it as sealing up a furnace to put the fire out, and then when cleaning it out [in order to start a new fire], it is the same kind of breathing, and since it seems to be yet seems not to be, it is always true breath. This is the subtlety of having singleness of spirit. Zhuangzi said [*Zhuangzi*, chapter 6]: “An authentic man breathes with his heels [as opposed to most people who breathe only with their throats].” It is this idea. It

is not a stopping of the breath, however, for it should not be interrupted while practicing. When you have trained to the point of attaining emptiness, when body is without body, when mind is without mind, then distinctions of form and spirit are but subtleties, and you will truly be in a condition of merging with the Way, at which point you will be capable of being one with the Void.

Later, you will practice emptiness and merge with the Way. [After the three stages of refining the essence and transforming it into energy, then training the energy and transforming it into spirit, and then training the spirit and returning to emptiness, a fourth level is here introduced of practicing emptiness and merging with the Way. If the three stages can be thought of as beginner/intermediate/advanced, this fourth level could be thought as mastery. The three stages of obvious energy, hidden energy, and neutral energy could perhaps here be considered a concluded process, as in this fourth stage you seem to be transcending energy altogether and being exclusively of spirit.] Once you can be silent and still, then upon sensing anything, you connect with it. “There is no situation in which you will not succeed” [*Zhong Yong*], for you will obtain the method regardless of the circumstances, and everything you do will be right. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Solidifying your virtue and rousing your mind has to do with martial arts. Nurturing your virtue and bestilling your mind is a matter of cultivating the Way.” Therefore the Xingyi boxing art and elixirism merge to become one.

二則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 2

形意拳。起點三體式。兩足要單重。不可雙重。單重者。非一足着地。一足懸起。不過前足可虛可實。着重在於後足耳。以後練各形式。亦有雙重之式。雖然是雙重之式。亦不離單重之重心。以至極高。極俯。極矮。極仰之形式。亦總不離三體式單重之中心。故三體式。為萬形之基礎也。三體式單重者。得其中和之起點。動作靈活。形式一氣。無有間斷耳。雙重三體式者。形式沉重力氣極大惟。是陰陽不分。乾坤不辨。奇偶不顯。剛柔不判。虛實不明。內開外合不清。進退起落動作不靈活。所以形意拳三體式。不得其單重之中和。先後天亦不交。剛多柔少。失却中和。道理亦不明。變化亦不通。自被血氣所拘。拙勁所捆。此皆是被三體式雙重之所拘也。若得着單重三體式中和之道理以後行之。無論單重雙重各形之式。無可無不可也

In Xingyi Boxing, the starting point is the “three-substance posture”, in which your feet should be single-weighted and must not be double-weighted. Single-weighted does not mean that one foot is touching the ground and the other foot is suspended in the air, but that your front foot can be empty or full while the greater weight is on your back foot. Later in practicing the various postures, there will also be double-weighted postures, but although they are double-weighted postures, they must not depart from a single-weighted center of balance. Whether it is a posture that is very tall, very short, leaned forward, or leaned back, never depart from the three-substance posture’s single-weighted center of balance. Thus the three-substance posture is the foundation of all the postures.

With the three-substance posture’s single-weightedness, you obtain a starting point of centered harmoniousness, the movements will be nimble, and the postures will be continuous without interruption. With a double-weighted three-substance posture, the postures will be heavy and the effort will be excessive. The passive and active aspects will not be distinguished, there will be no differentiating between the hexagrams of Qian and Kun [“Creative” and “Receptive”], no discerning between odd and even, no discriminating between hard and soft. Empty and full will not be clear, nor will there be clarity as to inwardly expanding and outwardly contracting, nor nimbleness in the movements of advancing and retreating or lifting and dropping.

Therefore if you do not obtain centered harmoniousness in Xingyi Boxing’s single-weighted three-substance posture, the innate and acquired will not intersect, hardness will increase and softness will decrease. In losing

your centered harmoniousness, the theory also will not be clear, not to mention adaptation will be hindered, blood and energy will be obstructed because of it, and clumsy energy will tie you up. This is all down to a double-weighted three-substance posture getting in your way. If you obtain the principle of centered harmoniousness in the single-weighted three-substance posture, then whenever you put it into action, it will no longer matter whether a posture is single-weighted or double-weighted.

三則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 3

形意拳術之道。練之極易。亦極難。易者。是拳術之形式。至易。至簡。而不繁亂。其拳術之始終。動作運用。皆人之所不慮而知。不學而能者也。周身動作運用。亦皆平常之理。惟人之未學時。手足動作運用。無有規矩。而不能整齊。所教授者。不過將人之不慮而知。不學而能。平常所運用之形式。入於規矩之中。四肢動作。而不散亂者也。果練之有恆。而不間斷。可以至於至善矣。若到至善處。諸形之運用。無不合道矣。以他人觀之。有一動一靜。一言一默之運用。奧妙不測之神氣。然而自己並不知其善於拳術也。因。動作運用皆。是平常之道理。無強人之所難。所以拳術練之極易也。中庸云。人莫不飲食也。鮮能知味也。難者是練者厭其拳之形式簡淡。而不良於觀。以致半途而廢者有之。或是練者惡其道理平常。而無有奇妙之法則。自己專好剛勁之氣。身外又務奇異之形。故終身練之而不能得着形意拳術中和之道也。因此好高務遠。看理偏僻。所以拳術之道理。得之甚難。中庸云。道不遠人。人之為道而遠人。即此意義也。

Practicing the method of the Xingyi boxing art is very easy, and is also very difficult. It is easy in the sense that the postures are very easy, very simple, and are not disorderly. The movements throughout this boxing art are always such that a person can understand them without having thought about them and can perform them without having learned them. The whole body moves according to commonsense principles.

However, for one who has not yet learned the art, there are not yet rules for the movements of his hands and feet, and so he will be unable to do them in an orderly way. When instructing, it is nothing more than drawing out a person's capacity to know without thinking, perform without learning, and execute postures with commonsense, and to introduce him to the standards by which the movements of his limbs will be kept in order.

If the practice is persevering and uninterrupted, perfection can be reached, at which point all the postures will conform with the Way. When other people observe you, with each movement and each stillness, each utterance and each silence, your spirit and energy will be subtle and unpredictable, and yet you yourself will not be at all aware of your perfection within the boxing art.

Because the movements are all based in commonsense principles, there is no forcing a person through what is difficult, and in that way practicing this boxing art is very easy. But as the *Zhong Yong* says: “Everybody eats and drinks. Few know how to savor.” What makes the art difficult is that a practitioner gets bored with the plainness and simplicity of the postures, feels that it is ugly to watch, until finally he gives up halfway. Or he hates that its principles are commonsensical, resenting it for having no fantastical methods. He fixates on using an energy of vigor and strives to show off with bizarre postures.

He can train his whole life and be unable to obtain the Xingyi boxing art's way of centered harmoniousness. Because he wants something lofty and seeks something distant, he looks upon the principles as being remote, thereby making the art's theory very difficult for him to grasp. The *Zhong Yong* says: “The Way is not far from people. It is their expectation of the Way that distances them from it.” This is exactly the idea.

四則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 4

形意拳術之道無他。神氣二者而已。丹道始終全丈呼吸。起初大小周天。以及還虛之功者。皆是呼吸之變化耳。拳術之道亦然。惟有煅煉形體。與筋骨之功。丹道是靜中求動。動極而復靜也。拳術是動中求靜。靜極而復動也。其初練之似異。以至還虛。則同。形意拳經云。固靈根而動心者。敵將也。養靈根而靜心者。修道也。所以形意拳之道。即丹道之學也。丹道有三易。煉精化氣。煉氣化神煉神還虛。拳術亦有三易。易骨。易筋。洗髓。三易即拳中。明勁。暗勁。化勁也。練至拳無拳。意無意。無意之中。是真意。亦與丹道。煉虛合道相合也。丹道有最初還虛之功。以至虛極靜篤之時。下元真陽發動。即速回光返照。凝神入氣穴。息息歸根。神氣未交之時。存神用息。懸懸若存。念茲在茲。此武火之謂也。至神氣已交。又當忘息。以致採取歸爐。封固。停息。沐浴。起火。進退升降歸根。俟動而復煉。煉至不動。為限數足滿。止火。謂之坎離交妒。此為小周天。以至大周天之工夫。無非自無而生有。由微而至著。由小而至大。由虛而積累。皆呼吸火候之變化。文武剛柔。隨時消息。此皆是順中用逆。逆中行順。用其無過不及中和之道也。此不過略言丹道之概耳。丹道與拳術並行不悖。故形意拳術。非粗率之武藝。余恐後來。練形意拳術之人。只用其後天血氣之力。不知有先天真陽之氣。故發明形意拳術之道。只此神氣二者而已。故此先言丹道之大概。後再論拳術之詳情。

The method of the Xingyi boxing art is peerless, for it is nothing more than two things: spirit and energy. Elixirism is from first to last entirely about breathing. It begins with the microcosmic breathing, then the macrocosmic breathing, then achieves return to emptiness, each stage a transformation through breath. This boxing art’s method is likewise, except that it is the work of training your body by way of working its muscles and bones. Elixirism is the seeking of movement within stillness, and then when movement reaches its peak, it returns to stillness. The boxing art is the seeking of stillness within movement, and then when stillness reaches its peak, it returns to movement. While there are similarities and differences in the way they begin the training, their returning to emptiness is the same for both.

It says in the Xingyi Boxing Classics: “To solidify your virtue by rousing your mind is a matter of dealing with opponents. To nurture your virtue by bestilling your mind is a matter of cultivating the Way.” Therefore the method of Xingyi Boxing is the same as the learning of the elixirists. In elixirism, there are three changes: refining the essence and transforming it into energy, refining the energy and transforming it into spirit, and refining the spirit and returning to emptiness. The boxing art also has three changes: changing the bones, changing the sinews, and washing the marrow. The three transitions within the boxing art are: the obvious energy, the hidden energy, and the neutral energy.

Train until “the boxing is without boxing, the intention is without intention, for within no intention is true intention”. Also as in elixirism, the emptiness training and the merging with the Way are the same thing. Elixirism has the practice of “begin by returning to emptiness”. Once there is a peak of emptiness and stillness, then your primordial true active aspect activates. This will suddenly turn your light upon yourself, concentrating spirit into your energy points, and with every breath you will return to your source.

When spirit and energy are not yet joined, preserve your spirit and just work with your breath as if you will dwell in it forever, keeping your mind on it always. This is called the “martial fire”. Once spirit and energy are joined, you may then forget about the breath, so that it is now like you are sealing up a furnace to put the fire out, then cleaning it out in order to start a new fire. In advancing and retreating, ascending and descending, you are returning to your source. Wait for movement to happen and then work at it [“smelt it”], working it until it attains stillness, enough stillness to “suppress the fire”. This is called “fire and water envying each other” and is the work of using the microcosmic breathing to attain the macrocosmic breathing. [From there is achieved emptiness, from which is attained purity.]

Only from nothing arises something, from the insubstantial comes the tangible, from the small comes the large, from emptiness is there accumulation. Your transformations are always a matter of what stage your breathing is at. Whether civilness or martialness, hardness or softness, they may fluctuate as necessary, for in all

of this, within going along there is going against and within going against there is going along. What is to be employed is a method of neither-excessive-nor-insufficient centered harmoniousness.

These have been just a few general words about elixirism. Since it and the boxing art run parallel rather than contrary to each other, the art of Xingyi Boxing is therefore not a crass martial art. I fear that later practitioners of it will only use the strength of their acquired vigor and not know of the energy of their innate true active aspect. Therefore in expounding on the method of the Xingyi boxing art, it is nothing more than these two things: spirit and energy. And having so far begun by discussing the general ideas of elixirism, I will now discuss the boxing art in more detail...

五則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 5

郭雲深先生言。練形意拳術。有三層之呼吸。

第一層練拳術之呼吸。將舌捲回。頂住上腭。口似開非開。似合非合。呼吸任其自然。不可着意於呼吸。因手足動作合於規矩。是為調息之法則。亦即練精化氣之工夫也。

第二層練拳術之呼吸。口之開合。舌頂上腭。等規則照前。惟呼吸與前一層不同。前者手足動作。是調息之法則。此是息調也。前者口鼻之呼吸。不過借此以通乎內外也。此二層之呼吸。著意於丹田之內呼吸也。又名胎息。是為練氣化神之理也。

第三層練拳術之呼吸。與上兩層之意又不同。前一層是明勁。有形於外。二層是暗勁。有形於內。此呼吸雖有。而若無。勿忘勿助之意思。即是神化之妙用也。心中空空洞洞。不有不無。非有非無。是為無聲無臭。還虛之道也。此三種呼吸。為練拳術始終本末之次序。即一氣貫通之理。自有而化無之道也。

In practicing the art of Xingyi Boxing, there are three stages of breathing:

In the first stage, your tongue curls up to touch the upper palate, and your mouth seems open but not open, closed but not closed. Your breathing is natural and must not be concentrated upon. It relies on the movements of your hands and feet, using them to regulate the pattern. This stage is the work of training your essence and transforming it into energy.

In the second stage, the standards of your mouth's quality of being open yet closed and your tongue touching the upper palate are the same as before, but the breathing is not the same as in the first stage. Before, the movements of your hands and feet determined the pattern, whereas now it is the breathing itself that is the regulator. Before, the breathing was a matter of nose [inhaling] and mouth [exhaling], whereas now the awareness only goes as far as in and out. In this second stage of breathing, pay attention to breathing within your elixir field, which is also called “infant breathing” [whereas it was in the first stage not to be concentrated upon at all]. Through this stage runs the principle of training your energy and transforming it into spirit.

In the third stage, it is different from the idea of both preceding stages. In the first stage, it is an obvious energy and it has an external form. In the second stage, it is a hidden energy and it has an internal form. In this stage, although there is breathing, it seems there is not. There is an intention of neither forgetting it nor assisting it. It is the wondrous effect of spirit transforming. Within the mind is emptiness. There is neither being nor not being, and without being or not being, there is silence and undetectability, the method of returning to emptiness.

These are the three stages of breathing in their sequence from beginning to end in the practice of this boxing art. There is here the principle of a single process running through it all: the method of something transforming into nothing.

人未練拳術之先。手足動作。順其後天自然之性。由壯而老以至于死。通家逆運先天。轉乾坤扭氣機。以求長生之術。拳術亦然。起點。從平常之自然之道逆轉。其機由靜而動。再由動而靜。成為三體式。其姿式。兩足要前虛後實。不俯不仰。不左斜。不右歪。心中要虛空。至靜無物。一毫之血氣。不能加於其內。要純任自然虛靈之本體。由着本體。而再萌動練去。是為拳中純任自然之真勁。亦謂人之本性。又謂之丹道最初還虛之理。亦謂之明善復初之道。其三體式中之靈妙。非有真傳不能知也。內中之意思。猶丹道之點玄關大學之言明德。孟子所謂養浩然之氣。又與河圖中五之一點。太極先天之氣。相合也。其姿式之中。非身體兩腿站均當中之中也。其中。是用規矩之法則。縮回身中散亂馳外之靈氣。返歸於內。正氣復初。血氣自然不加於其內。心中虛空。是之謂中。亦謂之道心。因此再動。丹書云。靜則為性。動則為意。妙用則為神。所以拳術再動。練去謂之先天之真意。則身體手足動作。即有形之物。謂之後天。以後天合着規矩法則。形容先天之真意。自最初還虛。以致末後還虛。循環無端之理。無聲無臭之德。此皆名為形意拳之道也。其拳術。最初積蓄之真意與氣。以致滿足。中立而不倚。和而不流。無形無相。此謂拳中之內勁也。內家拳術之名即此理也其拳中之內勁。最初練之。人不知其所以然之理。因其理最微妙。不能不詳言之。免後學入於歧途。初學入門。有三害。九要之規矩。三害莫犯。九要不失其理。八卦拳學詳之矣手足動作。合於規矩。不失三體式。之本體。謂之調息。練時口要似開非開。似合非合。純任自然。舌頂上腭。要鼻孔出氣。平常不練時。以至方練完收式時。口要閉不。可開。要時時令鼻孔出氣。說話。吃飯。喝茶時。可開口。除此之外。總要舌頂上腭。閉口。令鼻孔出氣。謹要。至於睡臥時。亦是如此。練至手足相合。起落進退如一。謂之息調。手足動作。要不合於規矩。上下不齊。進退步法錯亂。擡動呼吸之氣不均。出氣甚粗。以致胸間發悶。皆是起落進退。手足步法。不合規矩之故也。此謂之息不調。因息不調。拳法身體不能順也。拳中之內勁。是將人之散亂於外之神氣。用拳中之規矩。手足身體動作。順中用逆。縮回於丹田之內。與丹田之元氣相交。自無而有。自微而著。自虛而實。皆是漸漸積蓄而成。此謂拳之內勁也。丹書云。以凡人之呼吸。尋真人之呼處。莊子云真人呼吸以踵。亦是此意也。拳術調呼吸從後天陰氣所積。若致小腹堅硬如石。此乃後天之氣勉強積蓄而有也。總要呼吸純任自然。用真意之元神。引之於丹田。腹雖實而若虛。有而若無。老子云綿綿若存。又云虛其心。而靈性不昧。振道心。正氣常存。亦此意也。此理即拳中內勁之意義也

Before a person has practiced boxing arts, the movements of his hands and feet have a disposition toward obeying his acquired nature, that which goes from robustness to aging to dying. Daoists reverse it to the innate by inverting the movement of Qian and Kun [“Creative” and “Receptive”] with the mechanism of turning the energies, striving for a longevity art. The boxing art does likewise. It starts with the way of following along with ordinary naturalness and then reverses the process, going from stillness to movement and then from movement back to stillness in the making of the three-substance posture.

In the posture, your feet should be front foot empty, rear foot full. Neither lean forward nor back, nor incline to either side. Within your mind there should be emptiness, perfect stillness, insubstantiality. The slightest bit of vigor cannot be added within. There should be pure, natural, soulful beingness. From touching this beingness, the training will sprout. This is the true energy within the boxing art – pure naturalness. It is also called “inherent human nature”, as well as the elixirist principle of “begin by returning to emptiness”, and is also the doctrine of “the brightness of perfection restoring you to your original state”.

As for the wonders within the three-substance posture, if you do not have the true teachings, you will not be able to understand them. The idea within it is like the elixirist’s “shadowy doorway”, is what the *Da Xue* calls “shining virtue”, is what Mengzi called “nurturing one’s noble energy”, and conforms with the He River Diagram’s central mark, the “innate energy of the grand polarity”. Within the posture, it is not your body and legs standing centered that makes it centered. Its centeredness is due to your abiding by the rules of the posture. Withdraw any hyperactive energy, returning it within, so that your true energy can be restored to its original

state. There will then naturally be no extra vigor within, for within your mind is emptiness. This is what is called “centering”, and is also called the “Daoist mind”. You are to move in accordance with this.

The *Elixir Book* says: “Stillness is a matter of basic nature. Movement is a matter of intention. Subtlety is a matter of spirit.” Therefore when there is movement in the boxing art, what is practiced is called the “innate true intention”. The movements of body, hands, and feet then take shape, and this is called the “acquired [trained intention]”. The acquired conforms to standards and rules so as to imitate the innate true intention. Begin by returning to emptiness. End by returning to emptiness. It is the principle of cycling without end. It is the virtue of silence and undetectability. All these things together are known as the method of Xingyi Boxing.

This boxing art firstly stores true intention and energy until full enough that you are in a neutral position, not leaning in any direction, harmonizing without wavering. There is no form and nothing seen, and this is called the internal energy within the boxing art. (Internal boxing arts are so named because of this principle.) At the beginning of training the internal energy within the boxing art, a person will not understand the theory. Because the theory is so subtle, it has to be explained in detail so as to avoid sending students down the wrong road. In the beginning of learning, there are the standards of the three harms [sticking out your chest, lifting your abdomen, forcing the energy] and nine requirements. The three harms are not to be violated and the nine requirements are principles not to be neglected (as explained in [Chapters Two and Three of] *A Study of Bagua Boxing*). When the movements of the hands and feet conform to a standard, and when the three-substance posture is not neglected, being the foundation, all is being regulated.

When practicing, your mouth should seem open but not open, closed but not closed, as is natural. Your tongue touching the upper palate, breathing should be done through your nose. During ordinary time when you are not practicing, or once you have finished practicing, your mouth should be closed and must not be open, and you should constantly maintain nose-breathing. When talking, eating, or drinking, you can open your mouth, but beyond these, it always should be that your tongue touches the upper palate, your mouth is closed, and the breathing is being done through your nose. If you are conscientious about this, then it will still be so even when sleeping.

Practice until your hands and feet conform with each other, and lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, are as one. This is the breath being regulated. But if the movements of your hands and feet do not conform to a standard, there will be no uniformity above and below, your footwork when advancing and retreating will be disordered, your breath will be drawn in unevenly and come out very coarsely, and as a result your chest will feel clenched. All this is because when lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, your hands and feet are not conforming to a standard. This is the breath going unregulated, and as a consequence, both the boxing techniques and your body will be incapable of fluency.

The internal energy within the boxing art is when you take charge of your disordered external spirit and energy, applying the standards within the boxing art to the movements of your hands, feet, and body. Within going along, there is going against. Withdraw it into your elixir field to join with the primordial energy there. They go from nothing to something, from the abstract to the tangible, from emptiness to fullness, and both are gradually stored up and made complete. This is the boxing art’s internal energy. The *Elixir Book* says: “By way of ordinary breathing, we seek the exhaling of the authentic man.” As Zhuangzi said [*Zhuangzi*, chapter 6]: “An authentic man breathes with his heels [as opposed to most people who breathe only with their throats].” It is also this idea.

The regulating of breath in the boxing art is according to the accumulating of the acquired passive breath. If it gets to the point that your lower abdomen is hard as stone, this then is the acquired [active] breath accumulating forcefully. Always the breathing should be pure and natural. Use the primordial spirit of true

intention. Draw it into your elixir field. Although your belly is full, it seems empty, and though having something, yet seems to have nothing. Laozi said [*Daodejing*, chapter 6]: “Continuously storing...” It is also said [in Xu Congshi’s commentary to *Three in Agreement*]: “Empty your mind and your native intelligence is no longer obscured. Stimulate your Daoist mind and the true energy will be permanent.” It is also this idea. This is the theory of the internal energy within the boxing art.

七則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 7

形意拳之用法。有三層。有有形有像之用。有有名有相無迹之用。有有聲有名無形之用。有無形無相無聲無臭之用。拳經云。起如鋼鏗。起者去也。落如鉤竿。落者回也。未起如摘子。未落如墜子。起如箭。落如風。追風趕月不放鬆。起如風。落如箭。打倒還嫌慢。足打七分。手打三。五行四稍要合全。氣連心意隨時用。硬打硬進無遮攔。打人如走路。看人如蒿草。胆上如風響。起落似箭鑽。進步不勝。必有寒食之心。此是初步明勁。有形有相之用也。到暗勁之時。用法更妙。起似伏龍登天。落如霹靂擊地。起無形。落無踪。起意好似捲地風。起不起。何用再起落不落。何用再落。低之中望為高。高之中望為低。打起落如水之翻浪。不翻不躓。一寸為先。脚打七分手打三。五行四稍要合全。氣連心意隨時用。打破身式無遮攔。此是二步暗勁形迹有無之用也。拳無拳。意無意。無意之中。是真意。拳打三節不見形。如見形影不為能。隨時而發。一言一默。一舉一動。行止坐臥。以致飲食茶水之間。皆是用。或有人處。或無人處。無處不是用。所以無入而不自得。無往而不得其道。以致寂然不動。感而遂通也。此皆是化勁神化之用也。然而所用之虛實奇正。亦不可專有意。用於奇正虛實。虛者。並非專用虛於彼。已手在彼手之上。用勁拉回。落如鉤竿。謂之實。已手在彼手之下。亦用勁拉回。彼之手挨不着我的手。謂之虛。並非專有意於虛實。是在彼之形式感觸耳。奇正之理亦然。奇無不正。正無不奇。奇中有正。正中有奇。奇正之變。如循環之無端。所用不窮也。拳經云。拳去不空回。空回總不奇。是此意也。

There are three stages of applying techniques in Xingyi Boxing:

[1] A technique has shape and image. [i.e. You know it is there and you can see it is there – corresponding to obvious energy.]

[2] A technique has a name and an image, but leaves no trace. Or it makes a sound and has a name, but has no shape. [i.e. You know it is there but cannot sense it is there – corresponding to hidden energy.]

[3] A technique has neither shape nor image, and is silent and undetectable. [i.e. You neither sense it is there nor even know it is there – corresponding to neutral energy.]

It says in the Boxing Classics: “Lift like a steel file (lifting is when going out). Drop like a hooking pole (dropping is when withdrawing)... When it is not yet at the point of lifting, it is as though it is picking up. When it is not yet at the point of dropping, it is as though it is weighing down... Lift like an arrow and drop like the wind. Chase the wind and pursue the moon without letting up. Lift like the wind and drop like an arrow. Knock him down, beware of being slow... The feet are seventy percent of the attack, the hands thirty percent of the attack. The five elements and four limbs should merge and work as a whole. The energy connects with the mind and is used according to the moment. Firmly advancing attacks will go unimpeded... Fight opponents as if you are taking a stroll. Look upon them as if they are but weeds. Your courage rises like the wind whipping up. Lift and drop as if arrows are drilling in. If you advance and lose, it must be that you lost your nerve.” This is the first stage, the obvious energy, in which a technique has shape and is visible.

When you reach the point of hidden energy, technique increases in subtlety. “Lift like a crouching dragon climbing to the sky. Drop like a thunderbolt striking the ground. Lift without a shape. Drop without a trace... Send your intention out like wind rolling over the ground... If the lift did not lift, what would be the point of lifting again? If the drop did not drop, what would be the point of dropping again? Within going low, look

toward going high. Within going high, look toward going low... Lifting and dropping are like water in overturning waves... There is neither overturning nor drilling unless preceded by a small step... The feet are seventy percent of the attack, the hands thirty percent of the attack. The five elements and four limbs should merge and work as a whole. The energy connects with the mind and is used according to the moment. Attacks that collapse his posture will go unimpeded.” This is the second stage, the hidden energy, in which a technique has no shape and leaves no trace.

“The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention... Attacking with your fists, be invisible in all three parts, like looking at something and not being able to see even its shadow. [i.e. Whether your fist is extending, retracting, or twisting, it is all too quick to see.]” It will come out according to the situation. With each utterance and each silence, each action and each movement, and whether walking, standing, sitting, lying down, even into your eating and drinking, technique will always be there. Whether there is an opponent or not, at every point there will be technique, and thus “there is no situation in which you will not succeed”, for you will obtain the method regardless of the circumstances. Once you can be silent and still, then upon sensing anything, you will connect with it. All of this applies to the neutral energy, in which technique has become neutrality of spirit.

Furthermore, techniques have emptiness and fullness, craftiness and straightforwardness, which must not be specific intentions. When applying craftiness and straightforwardness, emptiness and fullness, in the case of emptiness for instance, it is not really a matter of specifically applying emptiness upon the opponent. When your hand is above his and you put your energy into pulling back, “dropping like a hooking pole”, this is called fullness. When your hand is below his and again you put your energy into pulling back, so that as his hand closes in it does not get to touch your hand, this is called emptiness. There is no focus of intention on being either empty or full, it is a matter of how you are being affected by the opponent’s posture. This is also the case with the principle of craftiness and straightforwardness.

The crafty is not without the straightforward. The straightforward is not without the crafty. Within the crafty there is the straightforward. Within the straightforward there is the crafty. The alternating of the crafty and the straightforward seem to cycle without end, and so their applicability is limitless. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Once your fist has been sent out, it should not withdraw emptily, for if it is withdrawing emptily, it is never being crafty.” This is the idea. [To make this more explicit, the five elements techniques each extend a hand while the other hand withdraws. The extending hand is clearly attacking, and so it can be called “straightforward”. The simultaneous action of the withdrawing hand goes comparatively unnoticed as an offensive tactic, and so it can be called “crafty”.]

八則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 8

形意拳術。明勁是小學工夫。進退起落。左轉右旋。形式有間斷。故謂之小學。暗勁是大學之道。上下相連。手足相顧。內外如一。循環無端。形式無有間斷。故謂之大學。此喻是發明其拳所以然之理也。論語云。一以貫之。此拳亦是求一以貫之道也。陰陽混成。剛柔相合。內外如一謂之化勁。用神化去。至於無聲無臭之德也。孟子云。大而化之。之謂聖。聖而不可知之。之謂神。丹書云。形神具杳。乃與道合真之境。拳經云。拳無拳。意無意。無意之中。是真意。如此者。不見而章。不動而變。無為而成。寂然不動。感而遂通也。老子云。得其一而萬事畢人得其一謂之大拳中內外如一之勁用之於敵。當剛則剛。當柔則柔。飛騰變化。無入而不自得。亦無可無不可也。此之謂一以貫之。一之為用。雖然純熟。總是有一之形迹也。尚未到至妙處。因此要將一化去。化到至虛無之境。謂之至誠。至虛至空也。如此大而化之之謂聖。聖而不可知之之謂神之道理。得矣。

In the Xingyi boxing art, the obvious energy is the work of the lesser learning. In advancing and retreating, lifting and dropping, turning to either side, it pauses in its postures, and so it is considered the lesser learning.

The hidden energy is then the way of the greater learning. “Above and below coordinate with each other... Hands and feet look after each other... Inside and outside are as one.” There is cycling without end, postures without pauses, and so it is considered the greater learning. Below are a few references to further elaborate upon this reasoning in the boxing theory:

It says in the *Lun Yu* [4.15, 15.3]: “A single idea runs through it.” This boxing art also strives to have the principle of a single idea running through it. Passive and active are blended together. Hard and soft are merged with each other. Inside and outside are as one. This is the neutral energy. Using spirit to neutralize and dispel distinctions, you will attain the virtue of being silent and undetectable.

Mengzi said [*Mengzi*, chapter 7b]: “When a great man transforms us, he is called ‘wise’. When a wise man is beyond comprehension, he is called ‘divine’.” The *Elixir Book* says: “Once the distinction between physical and spiritual has been utterly blurred, you are in an authentic state of being merged with the Way.” It says in the Boxing Classics: “The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention.” In this way, though you are unseen, yet you make a mark, and though you do not act, yet you have an affect. It is by having no agenda that you succeed. By being silent and still, then upon sensing anything, you connect with it.

Laozi said [*Zhuangzi*, chapter 12]: “Obtaining the One, all things are accomplished.” When a person obtains the One, this is called greatness. In the boxing, when the energy of “inside and outside are as one” is used while dealing with an opponent, then when it is time to be hard, there is hardness, and when it is time to be soft, there is softness. By transcending and adapting, “there is no situation in which you will not succeed”, no matter what it is.

This is the “single idea running through it” – the use of the One. Even though you are skillful, it is always the One that is manifesting. If you have not yet attained this level of subtlety, you must therefore send in the One to neutralize distinctions until at last you have achieved a state of emptiness. This is called “perfect sincerity” or “perfect emptiness”. In this way is realized the principle that when a great man transforms us, he is called “wise”, and when a wise man is beyond comprehension, he is called “divine”.

九則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 9

拳術之道。要自己煅練身體。以却病延年。無大難法。若與人相較。則非易事。第一存心謹慎。要知己知彼。不可驕矜。驕矜必敗。若相識之人。久在一處。所練何拳。藝之深淺。彼此皆知。或喜用脚。或善用手。皆知其大概。誰勝誰負。尚不易言。若與不相識之人。初次見面。彼此不知所練何種拳術。所用何法。若一交手其藝淺者自立時相形見絀。若皆是明手。兩人相較。則頗不易言勝。所宜知者一覲面先察其人。精神是否虛靈氣。質是否雄厚。身軀是否活潑。再察其言論。或謙或矜。其所言與其人之神氣。形體動作。是否相符。觀此三者。彼之藝能。知其大概矣。及相較之時。或彼先動。或己先動。務要辨地勢之遠近。險隘廣狹死生。若二人相離極近。彼或發拳。或發足。皆能傷及吾身。則當如拳經云。眼要毒手要奸。奸即巧也脚踏中門雖裏躡。眼有監察之精。手有撥轉之能。足有行程之功。兩肘不離肋。兩手不離心。出洞入洞緊隨身。乘其無備而攻之。由其不意而出之。此是近地以速之意也。兩人相離之地遠。或三四步。或五六步不等。不可直上。恐彼以逸待勞。不等己發拳。而彼先發之矣。所以方動之時。不要將神氣顯露於外。似無意之情形。緩緩走至彼相近處。相機而用。彼動機方露。己即速撲上去。或掌或拳。隨左打左。隨右打右。彼之剛柔。己之進退。起落變化。總相機而行之。此謂遠地以緩也。己所立之地勢。有利不利。亦得因敵人而用之。不可拘着。程廷華先生亦云。與彼相較之時。看彼之

剛柔。或力大。或奸巧。彼剛吾柔。彼柔吾剛。彼高吾低。彼低吾高。彼長吾短。彼短吾長。彼開吾合。彼合吾開。或吾忽開忽合。忽剛忽柔。忽上忽下。忽短忽長。忽來忽去。不可拘使成法。須相敵之情形。而行之。雖不能取勝于敵。亦不能驟然敗於敵也。總以謹慎為要。

It is the way of boxing arts that you should first train your body in order to prevent disease and prolong life. In this there is no great difficulty, but competing with opponents is not an easy matter. The first thing to keep carefully in mind is that you should know both self and opponent. You must not be arrogant, for with arrogance you will surely lose.

If you have known someone for a long time in the same place, you know what style he practices and the depth of his skill. Both of you know each other, whether one likes to use one's feet or is good at using one's hands, you both have the general gist of each other, and so who would win or lose would be rather difficult to say.

If you do not know a person and are meeting for the first time, you will not know of each other the style practiced or the techniques used. When you compete, the instant you stand to face each other is not sufficient to determine one another's depth of skill. When two people are apparently adept, it is very difficult to say who will win.

Therefore you should know when first meeting your opponent to begin by examining him. Is his spirit nimble or no? Is his energy abundant or no? Is his body lively or no? Then examine his speech – modest or arrogant? Do his [1] speech, [2] spirit and energy, and [3] body movements all tally with each other? Observing these three things, you will have a general idea of his skills and abilities.

When competing, whether he moves first or I move first, I must distinguish the situation we are in, whether we are far from each other or near, whether the ground is uneven or smooth, whether the area is spacious or confining, what positions would be most hazardous and most safe. If we are very close to each other, then whether he attacks with fist or foot, either way it can injure me.

It is just as is said in the Boxing Classics: “Your eyes should be venomous. Your hands should be treacherous (treacherous meaning skillful). Your foot should dash in right through the center of his doorway. Your eyes should be good at scrutinizing. Your hands should be capable at deflecting away. Your feet should be skillful at covering distance. Your elbows should not leave your ribs and your hands should not leave your center. When going out to attack his gaps, follow closely with your body. Attack where he is unprepared and appear where he does not expect.” The idea here is “using speed when near”.

When we are far apart from each other, whether by three or four steps, or five or six steps, or whatever, I must not go straight up to him. I beware the opponent and wait for him to tire himself out. Shooting out my fist is not as good as letting him attack first. When I then take action, I should not let my spirit and energy manifest outwardly, and so I appear to have no intention. I slowly go to the opponent until we are near each other and watch for an opportunity to make use of. Once he takes action, opportunity then manifests and I quickly pounce on it.

Whether using palm or fist, I follow him to the left and strike to the left, or follow him to the right and strike to the right, depending on his hardness or softness. I advance and retreat, lifting and dropping adaptively, always watching for the opportunity and acting according to it. This is called “using slowness when at a distance”. My own position has advantages and disadvantages, but so does the opponent's, which is what I make use of. I must not be restrictive as to my techniques.

Cheng Tinghua also said as much: “When competing with an opponent, I observe his hardness and softness, and whether he has great strength or a treacherous skill. When he hardens, I soften, and when he softens, I harden. When he rises, I lower, and when he lowers, I rise. When he lengthens, I shorten, and when he shortens, I lengthen. When he opens, I close, and when he closes, I open. Whether I suddenly open or suddenly close, or

suddenly harden or suddenly soften, or am suddenly above or suddenly below, or suddenly shorten or suddenly lengthen, or suddenly come back or suddenly send out, I must not get restricted by fixed techniques, I must observe the opponent’s situation and act according to it. Then even if I cannot defeat him, at least I cannot suddenly be defeated by him. It is always important to pay careful attention.”

十則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 10

拳經云。上下相連。內外合一。俗云上下是頭足也。亦云手足也。按拳中道理言之。是上呼吸之氣。與下呼吸之氣相接也。此是上下相連。心腎相交也。內外合一者。是心中神意下照於海底。腹內靜極而動。海底之氣。微微自下而上。與神意相交。歸於丹田之中。運貫於周身。暢達於四肢。融融和和。如此方是上下相連。手足自然相顧。合內外而為一者也

It says in the Boxing Classics that “above and below coordinate with each other” and that “inside and outside are merged into one”.

It is commonly said that “above and below” refer to the head and feet, but it is also said that it indicates the hands and feet. According to the theory within the boxing art, it is the air breathed above and the air breathed below that are connecting with each other, and this then is the meaning of “above and below coordinate with each other” – the heart and kidneys [i.e. the elements of fire and water] are interacting.

When inside and outside are merging into one, the mind centers itself and then the spirit and intention go down to the root chakra. [The actual name in the text is Hai Di, which means “Under the Sea”, another name for what is more commonly called Hui Yin, “Gathering Place of the Passive”. Hai Di is the Chinese name for the first or root chakra, called “Under the Sea” because it is placed below the Qi Hai, or “Sea of Energy”, which is approximately equivalent to the sacral chakra. All in all, the area intended can also be thought of simply as the perineum.] Within the abdomen, once stillness reaches a peak, there is a movement. Energy at the root chakra gently goes upward from below to interact with the spirit and intent, then returns to be within the elixir field. It then moves through the whole body, smoothly flowing into the four limbs.

If it is done in this way, above and below will coordinate with each other, hands and feet will naturally look after each other, and there will be merging of inside and outside to become one.

十一則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 11

練拳術不可固執不通。若專以求力。即被力所拘。專以求氣。即被氣所拘。若專以求沉重。即為沉重所捆墜。若專以求輕浮。神氣則被輕浮所散。所以然者。練之形式順者。自有力。內裏中和者。自生氣。神意歸於丹田者。身自然重如泰山。將神氣合一化成虛空者。自然身輕如羽。故此不可以專求。雖然求之有所得焉。亦是有若無實若虛。勿忘勿助。不勉而中。不思而得。從容中道而已

When practicing boxing arts, you must not have so much determination that it obstructs you. If you are obsessed with seeking to have strength, you will get jammed up by it. If you are obsessed with seeking to have energy, you will get clogged up by it. If you are obsessed with seeking to be heavy, it will weigh you down. If you are obsessed with seeking to be light, your spirit and energy will wander off.

Therefore the way to go about these things is to practice the postures smoothly, and then naturally there will be strength. When there is centered harmoniousness within, it will naturally produce energy. When your spirit and intention return to your elixir field, your body will naturally be as heavy as Mt. Tai. When your spirit and

energy merge into one and transform into emptiness, your body will naturally be light as a feather.

Thus you must not obsessively seek, even though there may be something to be gained through the seeking. Look upon that something as if it is nothing, treating its substantiality as insubstantial. Neither forget about it nor assist it. Do not strive for it and you will hit the target. Do not fixate on it and you will obtain it. Being patient and balanced is all you need.

十二則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 12

形意拳術之橫拳。有先天之橫。有後天之橫。有一行之橫。先天之橫者。由靜而動。為無形之橫拳也。橫者中也。易云黃中通理。正位居體。即此意也。拳經云。起無形。起為橫。皆是也。此起字是內中之起。自虛無而生有。真意發萌之時。在拳中謂之橫。亦謂之起。此橫有名無形。為諸形之母也。萬物即含育於其中矣。其橫則為拳中之太極也。後天之橫者。是拳中外形手足。以動即名為橫也。此橫有名有式。無有橫之相也。因頭手足。肩肘胯膝名七拳外形七拳。以動即名為橫。亦為諸式之幹也。萬法亦皆生於其內也。

In Xingyi's crossing technique, there is the “innate” crossing [i.e. its internality], the “acquired” crossing [i.e. its externality], and the crossing as a singleness of action [i.e. internal and external combined].

The innate crossing goes from stillness to movement, and is the formless crossing technique. The crossing technique is in the central position. It says in the *Book of Changes* [hexagram 2 explanation]: “The gentleman takes yellow [the color associated with the center, i.e. centeredness, and which corresponds to the element of earth and thereby to the crossing technique] as his guiding principle, which corrects his behavior and affects his very being.” This is exactly the idea. It says in the Boxing Classics to “lift without a shape” and that “lifting is crossing”. This is always the case. (This use of “lifting” has to do with lifting internally, in which something is generated from nothing. When the true meaning of it sprouts, it is in the boxing called “crossing” as well as “lifting”.) This crossing has name but no shape. It is the source of all the postures. All things are contained within it. The crossing technique is thus the grand polarity [taiji] within this boxing art.

The acquired crossing is the external form of the hands and feet within the technique, an action called “crossing”. This crossing has both name and posture, but it is without a crossing appearance because head, hand, foot, shoulder, elbow, hip, and knee outwardly form as the “seven fists” [and so there appears somewhat more of a forwardness to the technique than a sideways]. This action called “crossing” is the trunk of all the postures [which branch from it]. Though they are many techniques, they are all born from within this one.

十三則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 13

形意拳術。頭層明勁。謂之練精化氣。為丹道中之武火也。第二層暗勁。謂之練氣化神。為丹道中之文火也。三層化勁。謂之練神還虛。為丹道中火候純也。火候純而內外一氣成矣。再練亦無勁。亦無火。謂之練虛合道。以致行止坐臥。一言一默。無往而不合其道也。拳經云。拳無拳。意無意。無意之中是真意。至此無聲無臭之德至矣。先人詩曰道本自然一氣遊。空空靜靜最難求。得來萬法皆無用。身形應當似水流。

In the Xingyi boxing art, the first stage is obvious energy, which is called “training the essence and transforming it into energy”, and for the elixirists is the “martial fire”.

The second stage is hidden energy, which is called “training the energy and transforming it into spirit”, and for the elixirists is the “civil fire”.

The third stage is neutral energy, which is called “training the spirit and returning to emptiness”, and for the

elixirists is when the fire has been “cooked to purity”. Once the fire is purified, inside and outside become a single continuum.

Training further until there is no energy and no fire is called “training the emptiness so as to merge with the Way”. The result of this is that whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, with each utterance and each silence, in everything you do you will merge with the Way.

It says in the Boxing Classics: “The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention.” In achieving this, you will attain the virtue of being silent and undetectable. An ancestor’s poem goes:

*The method is essentially naturalness, a single energy flowing along.
Your state of emptiness and stillness is the hardest thing for the opponent to read.
He can try countless ways of attack but all of them will be useless,
for your body’s shape responds just like a river current.*

十四則

[GUO YUNSHEN SAID...] – Part 14

拳意之道。大概皆是河洛之理。以之取象命名。數理兼該。順其人之動作之自然。制成法則。而人身體力行之。古人云。天有八風。易有八卦。人有八脉。拳有八勢。是以拳術。有八卦之變化。八卦者。有圓之象焉。天有九天。星有九野。地有九泉。人有九竅九數。拳有九宮。故拳術有九宮之方位。九宮者。有方之義焉。古人以九府而作圖法。以九室而作明堂。以九區而作貢賦。以九軍而作陣法。以九竅九數。九數者即九節也頭為稍節心為中節丹田為根節手為稍節肘為中節肩為根節足為稍節膝為中節胯為根節三三共九節也而作拳術。無非用九。其理亦妙矣。河之圖。洛之書。皆出於天地自然之數。禹之範。大撓之歷。皆聖人得於天地之心法。余蒙老農先生。所授之九宮圖。其理亦出於此而運用之神妙。變化莫測此圖之道。夫婦之愚。可以與知與能。及其至也。雖聖人亦有所不知不能矣。其圖之形式。是飛九宮之道。一至九。

The reasoning of martial arts concepts is mainly the theory in the He River Diagram and Luo River Document, drawing from their representations and classifications of things, with their numbering and principle equally emphasized. They accord with human movement in its naturalness, and so they supply a standard by which the human body is to perform.

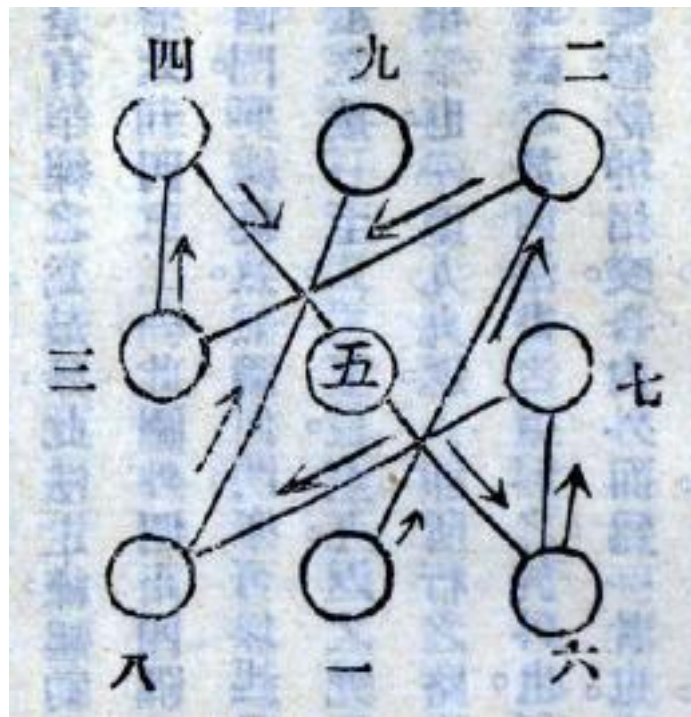
Just as ancient people said that “the weather has the eight winds” [*Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Medicine*, chapter 4], or the *Book of Changes* has the eight trigrams, or a person has eight pulses, so too in boxing arts there are eight dynamics, and thus in boxing arts there are the transformations of the eight trigrams. The eight trigrams signify roundness. The sky has nine levels of sky, the stars are spread in nine expanses, the ground has nine layers of strata, the human body has the nine orifices and nine counts, and so too in the boxing arts there are the nine “palaces”, and thus in boxing arts there is the compass of the Nine Palaces. The nine palaces signify squareness.

Ancient people used nine sections of government to make a surrounding law, nine rooms to form a courtyard, nine administrative districts for the collecting of taxes, nine armies to deploy a defense, nine orifices and nine counts to make a boxing art. (The nine counts are the nine sections: the head is a tip, the solar plexus is a middle, the elixir field is a root, the hand is a tip, the elbow is a middle, the shoulder is a root, the foot is a tip, the knee is a middle, the hip is a root. Three by three totals a count of nine sections.) [The nine orifices are the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, urethra, and anus.] All of these use nines, for the principle is so wonderful.

The He River Diagram and Luo River Document both come from the natural mathematics of the universe. In

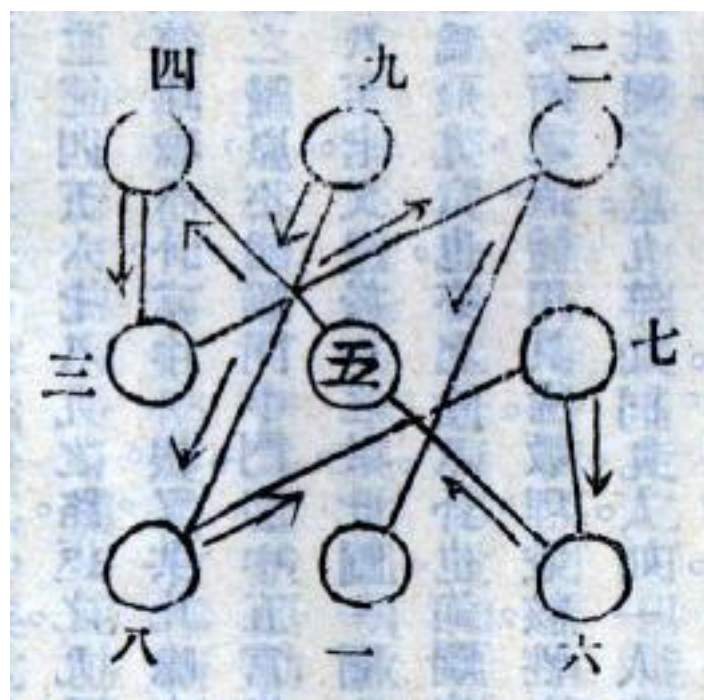
the cases of both Emperor Yu's Model [*Book of Documents*, chapter 32] and the calendar of Great Nao [traditional founder of the sixty-year cycle], they were wise men who obtained the pattern in Nature's mind. I on the other hand am an ignorant bumpkin, but when I received the Map of the Nine Palaces, its principle emerged in the same way, and it was marvelous to apply, that of transforming unpredictably. The Map's method is thus like inexperienced newlyweds who are able to achieve understanding and ability even where some wise men remain ignorant and impotent.

The form of the Map is the method of flying around the Nine Palaces, the principle being to go from 1 to 9:



九還一之理。

and to return from 9 to 1:



用竿九根布之。四正四根。四隅四根。當中一根。竿不拘粗細。起初練之。地方要寬大。竿相離要遠。大約或一丈之方形。或一丈有餘。或兩丈。不拘尺寸。練之已熟。漸漸而縮小。縮至兩竿相離之遠近。僅能容身穿行往來形如流水。旋轉自如。而不礙所立之竿。繞轉之形式。用十二形。或如鷄子入林翻身之巧。或如蛇撥草入穴之妙。或如猿猴蹤跳之靈活。各形之巧妙。無所不有也。此圖之效力。不會拳術者。按法走之可以消食。血脉流通。若練拳術而步法不活動者。走之可以能活動。練拳術身體發拘者。走之身體可以能靈通。練拳術心中固執者。走之可以能靈妙。無論男女老少。皆可行之。可以却病延年。強健身體。等等妙術。不可言宣。拳經云。打拳如走路。看人如蒿草。武藝都道無正經。任意變化是無窮。豈知吾得嬰兒玩。打法天下是真形。三回九轉是一式之理。亦皆在其中矣。此圖明數學者。能曉此圖之理。練八卦拳者。能通此圖之道也。此圖亦可作為遊戲運動。走練之時。舌頂上腭。不會練拳術者。行走之時兩手曲伸。可以隨便。要會拳術者。按自己所會之法則運動可也。無論如何運動。左旋右轉兩手身體。不能動着所立之竿為要。此圖不只運動身體已也。而劍術之法。亦含藏於其中矣。此九根竿之高矮。總要比人略高可以九個泥墊。或木墊。將竿插在內。可以移動練。用時可分布九宮。不練時可收在一處。若地基方便。不動亦可。若實在無有竿之時。磚石分布九宮亦可。若無磚石畫九個小

圈。走之亦無不可。總而言之。總是有竿練之為最妙。此法走練。起初按一二三四五六七八九之路。反之九八七六五四三二一。此圖外四正四隅八根竿。比喻八卦。當中一根。又共比喻九個門。要練純熟。無論何門。亦可以起點。要之歸原。不能離開中門。即中五宮也走之按一至二。二至三。至九。返之九至八。八至七。又還於一之數。此圖一圈一根竿也。一至九九返。一即所行之路也。名為飛九宮也。亦名陰八卦也。河圖之理藏之於內。洛書之道形之於外也。所以拳術之道。體用具備。數理兼該。性命雙修。乾坤相交。合內外而為一者也。走練此圖之意。九竿如同九人。如一人之敵九左右旋轉。曲伸往來。飛躍變化。閃展騰挪。其中之法則。按着規矩。其中而〔中之〕妙用。亦得要自己悟會耳。其圖之道。亦合於乾坤二卦之理。六十四卦之式。皆含在其中矣。在人賢者。識其大者。不賢者識其小者。得之莫不有拳術奧妙之道焉。

Use poles planted in an arrangement of nine, planting them at the four compass directions, the four corner directions, and one in the center. There is no restriction as to the thickness of the poles. In the beginning of training the exercise, the space should be large and the poles should be rather far apart from each other. Make it around ten feet square or more, perhaps twenty feet, no finicking over feet and inches.

Once you have practiced it to familiarity, gradually shrink the space to the point that the distance between the poles will only just admit your body moving between them. Be like flowing water, spinning around the poles so smoothly they are never in your way. For these circling postures, make use of the twelve animals, such as the skillfulness of “Hawk Enters the Forest” or “Hawk Turns Over”, or the subtlety of “Snake Slithers Through the Grass to Enter the Burrow”, or the nimbleness of “The Monkey Leaps”. Each animal’s ingenuity has a part to play in it.

The effects of the Map:

- For one who does not take part in boxing arts, this technique of walking can improve digestion and blood circulation.
- For someone training in boxing arts who has slow footwork, this walking can help you be more lively.
- For someone training in boxing arts who has difficulty breathing due to holding the breath, this walking can help you breathe more freely.
- For someone training in boxing arts who is too stubborn about making plans work out, this walking can help you be more quick-witted.
- Regardless of man or woman, old or young, all can do it. It can prevent disease and prolong life, can strengthen and invigorate the body, and a host of other effects that can hardly be declared in words.

It says in the Boxing Classics: “Fight opponents as if you are taking a stroll. Look upon them as if they are but weeds... In all martial arts methods, there is no orthodox path. Arbitrarily change postures without limit. I am overjoyed to have realized the innocent playfulness of an infant. Now my fighting method is authentic with every opponent I meet in the world... The three turnings up to the ninth repetition makes a complete process.” These principles are all within it.

One who understands math can realize the Map’s theory. One who practices Bagua Boxing can understand the Map’s method. With the Map you can also create recreational exercises. While practicing, your tongue is to be touching the upper palate. If you do not want to practice it as a boxing arts exercise, your arms can bend and extend as you please during the walking. If you do want to do it for boxing arts purposes, you can do it in whatever pattern you want. Regardless of whatever movement it is or whatever direction you turn, it is important to know that your hands or body cannot move to a place where there is already a pole standing. The Map is not only for exercising the body, for the methods of the sword art are also contained within it.

The height of these nine planted poles should always be your own height. The poles can be inserted into nine blocks with holes in them, which are made of either clay or wood, so the poles can be moved. When using them for practice, they can be arranged as the Nine Palaces. When not practicing with them, you can gather them up

and store them in a single place. But if the ground is convenient, you need not remove them at all. If you do not actually have poles, bricks can be laid out as the nine palaces. Or if you have no bricks, then drawing nine small circles and walking around them is acceptable as well. But for the most part, training with poles is the best way.

For this method of walking practice, start by walking in the order of 1 through 9, then reverse it and walk in the order of 9 through 1. Beyond the Map, the four compass and four corner directions of the eight planted poles are analogous to the eight trigrams, and adding the one planted in the center, they are then analogous to the nine gates [of a walled city]. You should practice it until you are skillful at it. It does not matter which gate you start at as long as you return to it, but you cannot neglect the center gate, for it is the fifth palace. Walk 1 to 2, 2 to 3, and so on up to 9, then reverse it and walk 9 to 8, 8 to 7, and so on back to 1.

One lap around each planted pole of the Map, going from 1 to 9 and from 9 back to 1, is walked, yet its name is “Flying Around the Nine Palaces”, and also called “Passive Bagua”. The He River Diagram’s theory is stored within it. The Luo River Document’s method manifests outwardly. Therefore in the method of boxing arts, form and function are both prepared, number and principle are simultaneously emphasized, your disposition and destiny are doubly cultivated, Qian and Kun [“Creative” and “Receptive”] are joined with each other, and internal and external are combined into one.

When doing walking training according to the Map, the nine poles are like nine people, as if you are one person versus nine opponents, spinning to either side, bending and extending, attacking and withdrawing, soaring and transforming, evading and ambushing. To get the standards within it depends on your following a pattern, but to get the subtleties within it will depend on your own realization. The Map’s method also combines the principles of the two trigrams of Qian and Kun, and the postures of the sixty-four hexagrams are all contained within it. A worthy person will recognize its greatness, an unworthy person will find it to be of a lesser degree, but in obtaining it, all will have the profound method of this boxing art.

一則

[BAI XIYUAN SAID...]

白西園先生云。練形意拳之道。實是却病延年。修道之學也。余自幼年行醫。今年近七旬矣。身體動作輕靈。仍似當年強壯之時也。並無服過參茸保養之物。此拳之道。養氣修身之理。實有確據。真有如服仙丹之效驗也。惟練拳易。得道難。得道易。養道尤難。所以練拳術第一要得真傳。將拳內所練之規矩。要知得的確。按次序而練之。第二要真愛惜。第三要有恆心。作為自己終身修養之功課也。除此三者之外。雖然講練。古人云。心不在焉。視而不見。聽而不聞。食而不知其味。就是終身不能有得也。就是至誠有恒心所練之道理。雖少有得焉。亦不能自驕。所練之形式道理。亦要時常求老師或諸位老先生們看視。古人云。人非聖賢誰能無過。若以驕。素日所得之道理。亦時常失去。道理以失。拳術就生出無數之病來。即拳術之病非人所得吃藥之病也若是明顯之病。還可容易更改。老師工夫大小道理深淺可以更正也。若是暗藏錯綜之病。非得老師道理極深。經驗頗富。不能治此病也。錯綜之病。頭上之病不在頭。腳上之病不在腳。身內之病不在內。身外之病不在外。此是錯綜之病也。暗藏之病。若隱若現。若有若無。此病於平常所練之人。亦看不出有病來。自己覺着亦無毛病。心想自己所練的道理亦到純熟矣。豈不知自己之病入之更深矣。非得洞明其理。深達其道者。不能更改此樣病也。若不然。就是晝夜習練。終身不能入於正道矣。此病謂之俗自然勁也。與寫字用工入了俗派。始終不能長進之道理相同也。所以練拳術者。練一身極好之技術。與人相較。亦極其勇敢。到容易練。十人之中可以練成七八個矣。若能教育人者。再自己工夫極純。身體動作極其和順。析理亦極其明詳。令人容易領會。可以作後學之表率。如此人者。十人之中難得一二人矣。練乾〔拳〕術之道理。神氣貫通。形質和順。剛柔曲折。法度長短。與曾文正公談書法。言拳〔乾〕坤二卦之理相同也。

Practicing the method of Xingyi Boxing truly is an illness-preventing life-prolonging study in cultivating the

Way. From my youth I have practiced medicine. Though this year I am almost seventy, my body's movements are nimble, I seem still as strong as in the prime of my life, and I have not needed medicines to maintain my health. The method of this boxing art is the principle of nourishing energy to cultivate oneself. Its effects are demonstrably true and it genuinely seems to serve as a panacea.

However, practicing boxing is easier than realizing the Way, and realizing the Way is much easier than cultivating the Way. Therefore in practicing boxing arts, the first thing of importance is to obtain the authentic teachings, which convey the standards of practice within the boxing art, for once you know you have the real thing, you will train according to the proper learning sequence. The second thing of importance is to truly cherish it. The third is to be of a persevering mind, making it the task of your whole life to master it.

Without these three things, then even if you are practicing, it will be as was said by an ancient man [Zengzi, from his commentary to the *Da Xue*]: “If your mind is not on what you are doing, you will look and not see, listen and not hear, eat and not taste.” This is to spend your whole life on it and be unable to obtain it. Real sincerity possesses the principle of training with a mentality of perseverance.

Although you may obtain a little, you cannot be complacent. Therefore in practicing the postures and principles, you also should frequently seek out instruction, looking to all of those from the older generation of teachers. Some ancient man said: “Since no one is perfect, who is it that can make no mistakes?” If you are proud, then usually whatever you get out of the principles will often go ignored soonafter. With the principles neglected, your boxing art will give rise to countless errors. (And errors in boxing arts are not such as a person can take medicine to cure.)

If errors are obvious, they can still be easily fixed, and a teacher of either greater or lesser skill, with either a deep or superficial understanding of the theory, can make corrections. But if errors are hidden and complex, then even a teacher whose theory is very deep and is backed by a wealth of experience will be unable to cure you of such maladies.

Complex errors are when the source of a problem with the head does not lie in the head, or of a problem with the foot not in the foot, or of a problem on the inside of the body not there, or of a problem on the outside of the body not there. Hidden errors – those that seem invisible yet visible, or to be there yet not to be there – are common enough in a person's training and do not get discerned as errors. If you are aware of them yourself, they will be no trouble.

By thinking about the principles in what you practice, you will become skillful. But without knowing your own errors, how can you attain a deeper level? If you do not obtain a thorough and profound understanding of the art's theory and method, you will not be able to fix these errors, and if not, then though training day and night, you will be for your whole life unable to get it right. These errors are considered to be of a crude and ordinary kind of strength, in the same league as a commoner's use of exclusively straight lines when writing calligraphy, and is no better than having a theory that from beginning to end cannot help you progress.

A practitioner of boxing arts who is very skillful with his whole body and very brave in competing with others – it is easy to find seven or eight such people among ten. But one who can instruct others, whose skill is so good, whose movements are so harmonious, whose analysis of the theory is so clear and detailed, that he can get others to easily understand and is a model for the next generation of students – it is difficult to find one or two such people among ten.

How to practice: spirit and energy are coursing through, and the form is harmonious – hardening and softening, twisting and turning, lengthening and shortening in the proper degree. It is the same principle as in Zeng Guofan's discussion of calligraphy, in which he says “[Everything comes from] the two trigrams of Qian and Kun”. [Kun (“Receptive”) represents the formalized external postures, while Qian (“Creative”) represents

the personality of the spirit within.]

[For whatever reason, Bai Xiyuan was given no bio of his own in Chapter One.]

一則

[LIU QILAN SAID...] – Part 1

劉奇蘭先生云。形意拳術之道。體用莫分。自己練者為體。行之於彼為用。自己練時。眼不可散亂。或視一極點處。或看自己之手。將神氣定住。內外合一。不可移動。要用之於彼。或看彼上之兩眼。或看彼之中心。或看彼下之兩足。不要站定成式。不可專用成法。或掌或拳。望着就使。起落進退。變化不窮。是用智而取勝於敵也。若用成法。即能勝於人。亦是一時之僥倖耳。所應曉者。須固住自己神氣。不使散亂。此謂無敵於天下也。

In the method of the Xingyi boxing art, there is no distinction between form and function, except that what you practice on your own is the form and what you do to an opponent is the function.

During solo practice, your eyes cannot be wandering around. Either look to a distant point or toward your own hand. Firmly consolidate your spirit and energy, inside and outside merging into one and never shifting apart.

When acting upon an opponent, you should either watch his eyes above, his middle section, or his feet below. Do not get stuck in an established pattern or focus on using an established method. Whether using palm or fist, observe the reason for it. In lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, adapt limitlessly. You are thereby using your intelligence and seeking victory based on the opponent. If you use an established method, then you can be defeated by the opponent or even just by bad luck. Knowing this, you must consolidate your spirit and energy, and not let them be in disarray. This is what it means to be invincible.

二則

[LIU QILAN SAID...] – Part 2

形意拳經云。養靈根而靜心者。修道也。固靈根而動心者。敵將也。敵將之用者。起如鋼銼。落如鉤竿。起似伏龍登天。落如霹靂擊地。起無形。落無踪。起意好似捲地風。束身而起。長身而落。起如箭。落如風。追風趕月不放鬆。起如風。落如箭。打倒還嫌慢。打人如走路。看人如蒿草。胆上如風響。起落似箭鑽遇敵要取勝。四稍具要齊。是內外誠實如一也。進步不勝。必有胆寒之心也。此是固靈根而動心者。敵將所用之法也。

It says in the Xingyi Boxing Classics: “To nurture your virtue by bestilling your mind is a matter of cultivating the Way. To solidify your virtue by rousing your mind is a matter of dealing with opponents.”

As for how to deal with opponents: “Lift like a steel file. Drop like a hooking pole... Lift like a hidden dragon climbing to the sky. Drop like a thunderbolt striking the ground. Lift without a shape. Drop without a trace... Send your intention out like wind rolling over the ground... Bind your torso when lifting. Hide your torso when dropping. Lift like an arrow and drop like the wind. Chase the wind and pursue the moon without letting up. Lift like the wind and drop like an arrow. Knock him down, beware of being too slow... Fight opponents as if you are taking a stroll, looking upon them as if they are but weeds. Your courage rises like the wind whipping up. Lift and drop as if arrows are drilling in. When encountering an opponent, you should seek to win, and so your limbs should all work in unison.”

Now inside and outside are truly as one, and “if you advance and lose, it must be that you lost your nerve.” This is the method of “solidifying your virtue by rousing your mind” in order to deal with opponents.

三則

道藝之用者。心中空空洞洞。不勉而中。不思而得。從容中道。而時出之。拳無拳。意無意。無意之中。是真意。心無其心心空也。身無其身身空也。古人云。所謂空而不空。不空而空。是謂真空。雖空乃至實至誠也。忽然有敵人來擊。心中並非有意打他。無意即無火也隨彼意而應之拳經云。靜為本體。動為作用。即是寂然不動。感而遂通。無可無不可也。此是養靈根而靜心者所用之法也。夫練拳至無。拳無意之境。乃能與太虛同體。故用之奧妙而不可測然能至是者鮮矣。

The function of the Daoist arts is to empty the mind within. When there is no effort, there is centering. When there is no expectation, there is obtaining. Follow the easy balanced way and the moment will emerge. [It says in the Boxing Classics:] “The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention.”

The mind is without mind, for the mind is empty. The body is without body, for the body is empty. An ancient man [Kumarajiva in his commentary to the *Diamond Sutra*] described this as: “Empty but not empty, not empty but empty – this is known as true emptiness.” Even though you are empty, you thereby achieve perfect genuineness and sincerity. Suddenly an opponent attacks you, but within your mind there is no intention of striking him (no intention meaning no anger), and you follow his intention along and respond to it. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Stillness is the fundamental form. In movement lies the function.” By being silent and still, then upon sensing anything, you connect with it, and everything you do will be right. This is the method of “nurturing your virtue by bestilling your mind”.

When you have drilled the boxing to the point of nothingness, then you have in the boxing the condition of no intention, and then you can be one with the “grand emptiness” [the universe in its essence]. Thus you will act with such subtlety that you cannot be fathomed, and you will then have become a rare one indeed.

一則

宋世榮先生云。形意拳之道。是先將拳術已成之着法。玩而求之。而有得之於心焉。或吾胸中有千萬法可也。或吾胸中渾渾淪淪。無一着法亦可也。無一法者。是一氣之合也。以致於應用之時。無可無不可也。有千萬法者。是一氣之流行也。應敵之時。當剛則剛。當柔則柔。起落進退變化。皆可因敵而用之也。譬如千萬法者。是一形一着法也。一着法之中。亦皆能生生不已也。譬如練蛇形。蛇有撥草之精。至於蛇之盤旋曲伸。剛柔。靈妙等式。皆伊之性能也。兵法云。譬如常山蛇陣式。擊首則尾應。擊尾則首應。擊其中。則首尾皆應。所以練一形之中。將伊之性能。格物到至善處。用之於敵。可以循環無端。變化無窮。故能時措之宜也。一形之能力如此。十二形之能力皆如是也。內中之道理。物之伸者。是吾拳之長勁也。物之曲者。是吾拳之短勁也。亦吾拳之划勁也。物之曲曲灣轉者。是吾拳之柔勁也。物之往前直去猛快者。是吾拳之剛勁也。雖然一物之性能。剛柔曲直。縱橫變化。靈活巧妙。人有所不能及也。所以練形意拳術者。是格物十二形之性能。而得之於心。是能盡物之性也。亦是盡己之性也。因此練形意拳者。是效法天地。化育萬物之道也。此理存之於內而為德。用之於外而為道也。又內勁者。內為天德。外法者。外為王道。所以此拳之用。能以無可無不可也。

The method of Xingyi Boxing is to begin by learning techniques, then to play with them and try them out until they become a part of you. If in my mind there are countless techniques, this will do fine. Or if in my mind there is only a pure simplicity, not even a single technique, this will also do fine. To be without a single technique is to have a singleness of energy, with the result that when responding to an opponent, everything I do will be right. But to have countless techniques is to have a single energy constantly flowing.

While dealing with an opponent, when it is time to be hard, I use hardness, and when it is time to be soft, I

use softness. My lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, adapting and neutralizing, can all be applied according to the opponent. To have countless techniques is to have a technique for each posture, and within each technique is always the capacity to generate new techniques without end.

Take the snake technique as an example. The snake is skilled at slithering through the grass. Once you are equal to its coiling and twisting, its bending and extending, its hardness and softness, its nimbleness and subtlety, you have all of its qualities. Sunzi said it is like the army formation of “Snake of Mt. Chang” [*Art of War*, chapter 11]: “Strike its head, its tail responds. Strike its tail, its head responds. Strike its middle, both head and tail respond.”

Therefore in practicing each animal, adopt its natural abilities. By studying the animal until you have reached perfection with it, then when applying it upon an opponent, you will be able to cycle without end and transform without limit, and thereby able to always do what is appropriate for the moment. Once this is the case for the abilities of one of the animals, let it be the case for all twelve.

The theory in this is that the animal’s extending is my fist’s long energy, the animal’s bending is my fist’s short energy, as well as my fist’s painting energy, the animal’s twisting and winding is my fist’s soft energy, and the animal’s fierce and fast directness is my fist’s hard energy. However, as to an animal’s natural abilities of hardness or softness, bending or directness, its ease and adaptability, its nimbleness and ingenuity, there are nevertheless some attributes that are impossible for a human to imitate.

Therefore one who practices the Xingyi boxing art studies the natural abilities of the twelve animals to get them into his mind so he is able to fully understand an animal’s nature, as well as fully understand his own. This means that one who practices Xingyi Boxing is following the example of Nature and the way it nurtures all things. This principle preserved inwardly is virtue and applied outwardly is the Way. Moreover, internal power is the “inward virtue of nature”, while the external technique is the “outward way of kings”. Thus when applying this boxing art, everything you do will be right.

二則

[SONG SHIRONG SAID...] – Part 2

形意拳術。有道藝。武藝之分。有三體式。單重。雙重之別。練武藝者。是雙重之姿式。重心在於兩腿之間。全身用力。清濁不分。先後天不辨。用後天之意。引呼吸之氣。積蓄於丹田之內。其堅如鐵石。周身沉重。站立如同泰山一般。若與他人相較。不怕足踢手擊。拳經云。足打七分。手打三。五行四稍。要合全。氣連心意隨時用。硬打硬進無遮攔。此謂之濁源。所以為敵將之武藝也。若練到至善處。亦可以無敵於天下也。練道藝者。是三體式。單重之姿式。前虛後實。重心在於後足。前足亦可虛。亦可實。心中不用力。先要虛其心。意思與丹道相合。丹書云。靜坐要最初還虛。不還虛。不能見本性。不見本性。用工皆是濁源。並非先天之真性。也拳術之理亦然。所以亦要最初還虛。不用後天之心意。亦並非全然不用。要全不用。成為頑空矣。所以用勁者。非用後天之拙力。皆是規矩中之用力耳。還虛者。丹書云。中者虛空之性體也。執中者。還虛之功用也。是故形意拳術起點。有無極。太極。三體之式。其理是最初還之功用也。丹書云。道自虛無生一氣。便從一氣產陰陽。陰陽再合成三體。三體重生萬物張。是此意也。三體者。在身體。外為頭手足也。內為上中下三田也。在拳中。形意。八卦。太極。三派之一體也。雖分三體之名。統體一陰陽也。陰陽總一太極也。即一氣也。亦即形意拳中。起點無形之橫拳也。此橫拳者。是人本來之真心。空空洞洞。不掛著一毫之拙力。至虛至無。即太極也。所謂無名天地之始。但此虛無太極。不是死的。乃是活的。其中有一點生機藏焉。此機名曰。先天真一之氣。為人性命之根。造化之源。生死之本也。此虛無中含此一氣。不有不無。非有非無。非色非空。活活潑潑的。又曰真空。真空者。空而不空。不空而空。所謂有名萬物之母。虛無中。既有一點生機在內。是太極含一氣。一自虛無兆質矣。此太極含一氣。是丹書所說的靜極而。動是虛極靜篤時。海底中。有一點生機發動也。邵子云。一陽初發

動。萬物未生時也。在拳術中。虛極時橫拳圓滿無虧。內中有一點靈機生焉。丹書云。一氣既兆質。不能無動靜。動為陽。靜為陰。是動靜既生於一氣。兩儀因此一氣開根也。動極而靜。靜極而動。劈崩躡炮。起躡落翻。精氣神。即於此而寓之矣。故此三體式內之一點生機發動。而能至於無窮。所以謂之道藝也。

The Xingyi boxing art divides into Daoist art and martial art. Its three-substance posture divides into a single-weighted version and a double-weighted version.

For training its martial aspect, there is the double-weighted posture. The weight is centered right between your feet, and you are putting forth effort with your whole body. There is no distinguishing between pure and impure, no discriminating between innate and acquired, and so it uses the acquired intention, drawing in energy from the breath to accumulate in your elixir field so as to make it as hard as iron. Your whole body stands as heavy as Mt. Tai, and when competing with others, there is no fear of feet kicking or hands striking. It says in the Boxing Classics: “The feet are seventy percent of the attack, the hands thirty percent of the attack. The five elements and four limbs should merge and work as a whole. The energy connects with the mind and is used according to the moment. Firmly advancing attacks will go unimpeded.” This way is called “impure” and is the martial skill for dealing with opponents. If you train this to the point of perfection, you can be invincible.

As for practicing its Daoist aspect, the three-substance posture is done as a single-weighted posture, empty in front, full behind. The center of the weight is on your rear foot, and your front foot can be either empty or full. There is no effort within your mind, for you should first empty your mind. The idea conforms with elixirism, which states: “In seated meditation, you should begin by returning to emptiness. Without returning to emptiness, you will not be able to see your original nature.” And without seeing your original nature, all your work will be impure and nothing to do with your innate true nature. The principle in this boxing art is likewise that “you should begin by returning to emptiness”. Do not use acquired intention, but also do not completely not use it, for if you want to completely not use it, that would be idiotically vacuous. Therefore when applying power, it is not the use of habitual clumsy effort, it is always to be the balanced use of force.

Returning to emptiness is as described in the *Elixir Book*: “Centeredness is the quality of emptiness. The maintaining of centeredness is the function of returning to emptiness.” Therefore the starting point of the Xingyi boxing art is the wuji state [nonpolarity], then the taiji state [grand polarity], then the three-substance posture. The principle is the practice of “begin by returning to emptiness”. The *Elixir Book* says: “The Way: from emptiness arises a single energy, then from the single energy is generated the passive and active aspects, the passive and active then combine to make the three substances, and then from the three substances are all things born and raised.” It is this idea.

The three substances in the body externally are the head, hands, and feet, and internally are the three elixir fields of upper, middle, and lower, and in the boxing arts, they are the three branches – Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji – as a single substance. Although they are separated into three names, they are united in their essence by a single passivity-activity, which together are a taiji [i.e. a singularity of duality, or the pole of the polarities], meaning the singleness of energy. As for the taiji within Xingyi Boxing, it is the initiating action of the formless crossing technique. This crossing technique is a person’s original true mind, insubstantial, not clinging to the slightest bit of clumsy effort. Perfect emptiness is a taiji. As it is said [*Daodejing*, chapter 1]: “Namelessness is the beginning of the universe.”

However, this emptiness-taiji is not something dead, but something alive, for stored within it is a life-spark. This spark is called the “innate authentic singleness of energy”, which is the basis of human life, the source of Nature, the basis of life and death. Within this emptiness is contained singleness of energy. There is no being and no not being, and without either being or not being, there is neither expression nor emptiness, just a liveliness. It is also called “true emptiness” – that which is empty but not empty, not empty and yet empty. As it

is said [*DDJ*, chapter 1]: “Naming is the mother of all things.”

In emptiness, there is a life-spark within. It is the singleness of energy contained in the grand polarity, manifesting from emptiness. This singleness of energy contained in the grand polarity is what the *Elixir Book* means when it says that “when stillness reaches its peak, there is movement, and then once at the peak of emptiness and stillness, within the root chakra the life-spark rouses”. As worded by Shao Yong: “It is when the active aspect starts to move, but all things are not yet born.” Within the boxing art, when emptiness reaches its peak, the crossing technique is complete and without gaps, and within there is the inspiration of the life-spark.

The *Elixir Book* says: “Once singleness of energy has manifested, you cannot be without movement and stillness.” Movement is active. Stillness is passive. Thus movement and stillness arise from a singleness of energy because the passive and active sprout from the single energy. When movement reaches its peak, there is stillness. When stillness reaches its peak, there is movement. Chopping, crashing, drilling, blasting, lifting and drilling, dropping and overturning, and essence, energy, and spirit are all derived from this. Therefore, once within the three-substance posture there is any manifestation of movement, there is no limit as to what it can do. In this way, it is considered a Daoist art.

三則

[SONG SHIRONG SAID...] – Part 3

靜坐工夫以呼吸調息。練拳術以手足動作為調息。起落進退。皆合規矩。手足動作。亦具和順。內外神形相合。謂之息調。以身體動作旋轉。縱橫往來。無有停滯。一氣流行。循環無端。謂之停息。亦謂之脫胎神化也。雖然一是動中求靜。一是靜中求動。二者似乎不同。其實內中之道理則一也。

Sitting meditation regulates by way of breathing, while the practice of boxing arts regulates by way of the movements of hands and feet. In lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, there should always be adherence to a standard, and the movements of your hands and feet should all be fluent.

Inside and outside, the spirit and the posture, merge with each other. This is looked upon as a harmonizing, and when it is applied to your body’s movements and turns, crissings and crossings, comings and goings, there is no stagnation. There is continuous flowing, cycling without end, although it is called a “cessation” [of internal fire in order to cleanse the self and start up a new and purer fire]. It is also called “being reborn as an immortal”.

In one case [boxing arts] there is seeking stillness within movement and in the other [meditation] there is seeking movement within stillness. Although the two things seem to be different, the principle within them is in fact the same.

一則

[CHE YIZHAI SAID...]

車毅齋先生云。形意拳之道。合於中庸之道也。其道中正。廣大至易至簡。不偏不倚。和而不流。包羅萬象。體物不遺。放之則彌六合。卷之則退藏於密。其味無窮。皆實學也。惟是起初所學。先要學一派。一派之中。亦得專一形而學之。學而時習之。習之已熟。然後再學他形。各形純熟。再貫串統一而習之。習之極熟。全體各形之式。一形如一手之式。一手如一意之動。一意如同自虛空發出。所以練拳學者。自虛無而起。自虛無而還也。到此時。形意也。八卦也。太極也。諸形皆無。萬象皆空。混混沌沌。一氣渾然。何有太極何有形意。何有八卦也。所以練拳術不在形式。只在神氣圓滿無虧而已。神氣圓滿。形式雖方。而亦能活動無滯。神氣不足。就是形式雖圓。動作亦不能靈通也。拳經云。尚德不尚力。意在蓄神耳。用神意合丹田。先天真陽之氣運化於周身。無微不至。以至於應用。無處不有。無時不然。所謂物物一太極。物物一陰陽也。中庸云。鬼神之為德。其盛矣

乎。視之而弗見。聽之而弗聞。體物而不可遺。亦是此拳之意義也。所以練拳術者。不可守定成規成法。而應用之。成法者。是初入門教人之規則。可以變化人之氣質。開人之智識。明人之心性。是化除後天之氣質。以復其先天之氣也。以至虛無之時。無所謂體。無所謂用。拳經云。靜為本體。動為作用。是體用一源也。體用分言之。以體言。行止坐臥。一言一默。無往而不得其道也。以用言之。無可無不可也。余幼年間血氣盛足。力量正大。法術記的頗多。用的亦熟亦快。每逢與人相比較之時。觀彼之形式。可以用某種手法正合宜。技術淺者。占人一氣之先。往往勝人。遇着技術深者。觀其身式。用某種手法亦正合宜。一至彼之身邊。彼即隨式而變矣。自己的舊力未完。新力未生。往往再想變換手法。有來不及處。一時要進退不靈活。就敗於彼矣。以後用力之久。而一旦豁然貫通。將體式法身。全都脫去。始悟前者。所練體式。皆是血氣。所用之法術。乃是成規先前用法。中間皆有間斷。不能連手變化。皆因是後天用事。不得中和之故也。昔年有一某先生。亦是練拳之人。在余處閒談。彼憑着血氣力足。不明此拳之道理。暗中有不服之意。余此時正洗面。且吾洗面之姿式。皆用騎馬式。並未注意於彼。不料彼要取玩笑。起身用脚。望着余之後腰。用脚踢去。彼足方到予之身邊。似挨未挨之時。予並未預料。譬如靜坐工夫。丹田之氣始動。心中之神意知覺。即速又望北接渡也。此時物到神知。予神形合一。身子一起。覺腰下有物掙出。回觀則彼跌出一丈有餘。平身躺在地下。予先何從知彼之來。又何從知以何法應之。此乃拳術無意中。抖擻之神力也。至哉信乎。拳經云。拳無拳、意無意。無意之中。是真意也。至此拳術。無形無相。無我無他。只有一神之靈光。奧妙不測耳。拳經云。混元一氣吾道成。〔道成〕莫外五真形。真形內藏真精神。神藏氣內丹道成。如問真形須求真。要知真形合真相。真相合來有真訣。真訣合道得徹靈。養靈根而動心者。敵將也。養靈根而靜心者。修道也。武藝雖真竅不真。費盡心機枉勞神。祖師留下真妙訣。知者傳授要擇人。

The way of Xingyi Boxing conforms to the Way as described in the *Zhong Yong*. Its method is centered yet expansive, and it is easy and simple. There is neither leaning nor inclining, there is harmonizing without wavering, and it includes everything with nothing left out. “Sending out, it goes beyond the ends of the universe [the ‘six unions’ – i.e. the six directions of north, south, east, west, up, down]. Rolling in, it stores away tightly. It is infinitely delightful and all of it is learning of substance.”

When beginning to learn, first learn just one style, and within that one style, focus on learning just one posture. Learn it and constantly practice it, drilling it until you are skillful at it, and then you can learn another posture. Once you are well-versed in each posture, they can then be practiced in combination with each other. When you are highly skillful at them, whole-bodied in each posture, one posture is like the posture of a single hand, the posture of a single hand like the movement of a single thought, and a single thought like the expressing of an empty mind.

Therefore when learning how to practice the boxing, it starts from emptiness and returns to emptiness. When you reach this point, the notions of Xingyi, Bagua, or Taiji all disappear into nothing but waves and ripples, a vagueness of oneness in which there can no longer be a “Taiji” or a “Xingyi” or a “Bagua”. Therefore the practice of the boxing arts does not lie in the postures, only in the spirit and energy being fully rounded and without gaps.

If your spirit and energy are full, then even if the posture is square, you will be able to move without sluggishness. If your spirit and energy are insufficient, then even if the posture is round, you will be unable to move with nimbleness. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Esteem virtue rather than force. The idea is in the storing of spirit.” Merge your spirit and intention into your elixir field. Your innate authentic vitality transforms your whole body, reaching to the smallest place. When applying it, it will be everywhere all the time. And so it is said that all things are a grand polarity, everything a single passivity-activity.

The *Zhong Yong* says: “The special power of ghosts and spirits, how they prosper by it! Look for them and you will not see them. Listen for them and you will not hear them. And yet spirit inhabits all things, excluding nothing.” This is also the idea in this boxing art. Therefore one who trains in the boxing arts cannot hold to a

fixed set of rules or methods and also apply it. Set methods are rules for the beginning of instruction which can transform a person's temperament, expand a person's knowledge, illuminate a person's character, eliminate acquired habits and return a person to one's innate instincts. But once you attain emptiness, there is nothing that can any longer be called form and nothing that can any longer be called function.

It says in the Boxing Classics: "Stillness is the fundamental form. In movement lies the function." Form and function have the same source. To speak of them separately, in the case of form, whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, with each utterance and each silence, you will obtain the method regardless of the circumstances, and then in the case of function, everything you do will be right.

When I was young, I had an overbearing temperament and great strength. I memorized many techniques and applied them with skill and speed. Whenever I competed with others, I observed the opponent's posture and could apply certain techniques as the most suitable. When it was an opponent with a shallow skill, I could tell what he was going to do beforehand and frequently won.

When I then encountered an opponent with a deep skill, I observed his posture and again applied certain techniques as the most suitable, getting him from the side, but he went along with my posture and adapted. Before my old power had finished and my new power had begun, I constantly thought about changing techniques, but it was always too late to do anything, and so I was not nimble enough when I needed to be advancing or retreating and was defeated by him.

Afterwards I worked hard at it for a long time until one day I suddenly understood. I then took my postures and techniques and threw them all away. I had begun to realize that the way I was training was all vigor and that the techniques I applied were all patterned beforehand. Between techniques there was always a disconnection and I was unable to link them adaptively. This was all because they were acquired techniques, and as a result they lacked centered harmoniousness.

Some years ago, there was a man who also practiced boxing that I chatted with in my spare time, and as he tended toward vigor and strength, he did not understand the theory behind my boxing art or that hidden within it was a non-submitting mentality. I was at that moment washing my face, which I always did in a horse-riding stance, and I was not paying attention to him. He suddenly decided to get up and kick me as a joke, and so he targeted my lower back and kicked.

His foot reached my body, and in that moment when it had almost connected but not yet connected, I was still unprepared for it. Just as in seated meditation practice, the energy in my elixir field started to move and I subconsciously became aware of him, then I quickly turned to meet what was going on behind me. At this moment I became fully conscious of it and my spirit and posture merged into one. My body became alert, and I felt my waist lowering and bumping outward. I had turned to see him, and as a result he fell more than ten feet away and was lying flat on the ground.

How did I know in the first place that he was attacking? On top of that, how did I know how to respond? This then is the boxing art without intention. It rouses our supernatural aspect that we find hard to believe. It says in the Boxing Classics: "The boxing is without boxing. The intention is without intention. Within no intention is true intention." Attaining this level in the boxing arts, there is no form, no relationship, no me, no him, only a glorious spirit, subtle and unpredictable.

It says in the Boxing Classics:

"From the primeval oneness is our method made, and in the method is nothing beyond the five true forms [i.e. the five elements]. Stored within these forms is essential spirit, and stored within this spirit is the energy of the elixirist ways.

"If you wonder how we are to get to the authenticity of the true forms, you must understand that the true

forms merge in an authentic relationship. From this authentic relationship comes genuine skill, and as the genuineness of the skill merges with the Way, your realization builds to the revelatory.

“To nurture your virtue by rousing your mind is a matter of dealing with opponents. To nurture your virtue by bestilling your mind is a matter of cultivating the Way.

“There are genuine skills in martial arts but also false ones, and one can go nuts trying to figure out which is which. Because the founder preserved the true skills, those who know them should be discriminating as to who they pass them on to.”

一則

[ZHANG SHUDE SAID...]

張樹德先生云。形意拳之道。不言器械。予初練之時。亦只疑無有槍刀劍術之類。予練槍法數十年。訪友數省。相遇名家。亦有數十餘名。所練門派不同。亦各有所長。予自是而後。晝夜勤習。方得其槍中之奧妙。昔年用槍。總以為自己身手快利。步法活動。用法多巧。然而與人相較。往往被人所制。後始知不在乎形式法術。有身如無身。有槍如無槍。運用只在一心耳。心即槍槍即心也。槍分三節八楞。用眼視定彼之形式。上中下三路。或稍節。中節。根節。心一動。而手足與槍合一。似蛟龍出水一般。直到彼身。彼即敗矣。方知手足動作。教練純熟。不令而行也。予自練形意拳以來。朝夕習練。將道理得之於身心。而又知行合一。故同一長短之槍。已覺自己之槍。昔用之似短。今用之則長。更覺善用者不在槍之形式長短。全在拳中神意之妙用也。又方知拳術即劍術槍法。劍術槍法亦即拳術也。拳經云。心為元帥。眼為先鋒。手足為五營四哨。以槍為拳。以拳為槍。槍扎如射箭。即此意也。故此始悟形意拳術。不言槍劍。因其道理中和。內外如一。體物而不遺。無往而不得其道也。 The method of Xingyi Boxing does not discuss weapons [i.e. does not have a special theory for weapons that is independent of the boxing theory]. When I began training, I only thought about arts like the spear, saber, and sword. I trained the spear techniques for several decades, paying visits around the provinces to notable experts, many of whom were renowned. The systems they practiced were different, each with its own strong points. After this I trained diligently, day and night, until finally I obtained the spear’s subtleties.

In former years when I had used the spear, I always took advantage of the quickness of my body and hands. My footwork, movements, and techniques were very skillful, yet when I competed with others I was often controlled by them. Later I began to understand that it is not a matter of posture or technique. To have a body was the same as having no body, and to have a spear was the same as having no spear. The exercise lies only in a singleness of mind. (The mind is the spear. The spear is the mind.)

The spear divides into three sections and eight edges [i.e. eight angles of cutting]. Use your eyes to intently observe the opponent’s posture. Above, middle, and below are the three paths, [targeting] his tip, middle, or root sections [i.e. head, chest, or lower abdomen]. When your mind moves, your hands, feet, and spear all move as one. It is like the “flood dragon leaving the water”, heading straight to the opponent’s body, and he is promptly defeated.

Once I knew the movements of the hands and feet, I practiced what I was taught until I was skillful, able to do it without thinking. Since I started practicing Xingyi Boxing, training day and night has made the principle realized in both my body and mind, and knowing and doing has been merged into one. Hence it does not matter if it is a long or short spear, either way it is my spear. I used to use a relatively short spear, but now I use a long spear. As I felt I was getting better at wielding it, it was no longer a matter of the spear posture or its length, but entirely in the style’s subtlety of spiritual intent.

I then comprehended that the boxing art is the sword art and the spear art, and that the sword and spear arts are also the boxing art. It says in the Boxing Classics: “The mind is the commander, the eyes are the vanguard,

and the hands and feet are the battalions and patrols. Treat spear as fist and fist as spear. When the spear stabs, it is like shooting an arrow.” This is exactly the idea, and from this I began to understand why the Xingyi Boxing art does not discuss spear or sword. Because its principle is one of centered harmoniousness, inside and outside are the same thing. When any of it is expressed with nothing left out, you will have obtained the method for any circumstances.

一則

[LIU XIAOLAN SAID...]

劉曉蘭先生云。形意拳之道無他。不過變化人之氣質得其中和而已。從一氣而分陰陽。從陰陽而分五行。從五行而還一氣。十二形之理。亦從一氣陰陽五行變化而生也。朱子云。天以陰陽五行。化生萬物。氣以成形。而理即敷焉。即此意也。余從幼年練八極拳。工夫頗深。拳中應用之法術。如攙肘定肘擠肘挎肘等等之著法。亦極其純熟。與人相較。往往勝人。其後遇一能手身軀靈變。或離或合。則吾法無所施。往往拘守成法而不能變。尚疑為自己工夫不純之過也。其後改練形意拳、習五行生尅。應用之法則。如劈拳能破崩拳。以金尅木。躡拳能破跑拳。以水尅火。習至數十年。方悟所得之道。知行合一之理。心中極其虛靈。身形亦極其和順。內外如一。又知五行拳互相生尅。金尅木。木亦能尅金。金生水。水亦能生金。古人云。互相遞為子孫之意也。以前所用之法則。而時應用。無不隨時措之宜也。亦無入而不自得也。因此始知形意拳。是個中和之體。萬物皆涵育於其中矣。

The method of Xingyi Boxing is without compare, nothing less than transforming a person’s temperament and achieving centered harmoniousness. From a single energy, it separates into passive and active aspects. From passive and active, it separates into the five elements. From the five elements, it returns to being the single energy. The theory of the twelve animals is also generated from the process of oneness > passive and active > five elements. Zhuzi said: “Nature uses the passive and active aspects and the five elements to transform and generate all things. Energy creates form, and principle is applied to it.” This is exactly the idea.

I had practiced Baji Boxing from my youth, and my skill became quite deep. Among its practical methods are techniques such as the piercing elbow, bracing elbow, pressing elbow, carrying elbow, and so on. Becoming very skillful in them, I often won when competing with others, but I later encountered an expert whose body adapted so nimbly, one moment coming away, another moment coming in, and so I had no chance to carry out my techniques. I kept on holding to established patterns and was unable to adapt, and the problem was the impurity of my own skill.

After that I switched to practicing Xingyi Boxing, and trained in the two-person exercise of the five elements generating and overcoming each other. Examples of its applications are that the chopping technique can defeat the crashing technique, since metal overcomes wood, and the drilling technique can defeat the blasting technique, since water overcomes fire. After practicing for several decades, I came to realize the method, the principle that knowing and doing is merged into one. Within my mind I achieved a naturalness and my body posture likewise achieved a harmoniousness, inside and out becoming as one. I also understood how the five elements generate and overcome each other, and that while metal overcomes wood, wood also can overcome metal, and while metal generates water, water also can generate metal.

[This particular theory of generation does not work for the elements themselves, but for the techniques they represent. Metal can overcome wood by chopping it, but there is no method by which wood overcomes metal. Metal can generate water by way of overnight condensation, but there is no means by which water generates metal. Therefore what he means is that while the chopping technique defeats the crashing technique, and the chopping technique leads naturally into the drilling technique, he has through experience learned that the order

of these things can be reversed so that crashing can also be used to defeat chopping, and that drilling can just as naturally lead into chopping. Since his theme here is things merging into one, his point seems to be that the proper order of the generation sequence can be merged with its reverse order, and so also for the overcoming sequence, and that there is no longer a sequence of one following another in a prescribed way, for at his level they are now all one.]

Someone from a previous generation said: “It is the idea of passing it down to each other through the generations.” [i.e. What matters is that technique follows technique follows technique.] By using the methods I have stated above, when I then applied techniques they were always appropriate to the situation, and “there was no situation in which I did not succeed”. Consequently I began to understand that Xingyi Boxing is a system of centered harmoniousness, which is a state that nurtures all things.

一則

[LI JINGZHAI SAID...]

李鏡齋先生言。常有練拳術者。多有體用不合之情形。每見所練之體式。工夫極其純熟。氣力亦極大。然而所用之法則。常有與體式相違者。皆因是所練之體中形式不順。身心不合。則有悖戾之氣也。譬如儒家讀書。讀的極熟。看理亦極深。惟是所作出之文章。常有不順。亦是伊所看書之理。則有悖謬之處耶。雖然文武不同道。其理則一也。

Usually among those who train in boxing arts, many have a situation in which form and function do not merge. We often see postures being practiced with much skill and great power, but the techniques and the postures are usually at odds with each other, and because of this the training of the postures does not fit, the body and mind do not blend, and thus there is a corrupted energy.

Take for example a Confucian scholar who reads books to a deep level and also considers their principles very deeply, yet he can only make essays, and usually not very good ones, and so the principles he reads in the books thus dwell in absurdities. Although literary and martial are different methods, their principle is the same.

一則

[LI CUNYI SAID...] – Part 1

李存義先生言。拳經云。靜為本體。動為作用。寂然不動。感而遂通。是化勁練神還虛之用也。明暗勁之體用。是將周身四肢鬆開。神氣縮回。而沉於丹田。內外合成一氣。再將兩目視定彼之兩目。或四肢。自己不動。而為體也。若是發動。剛柔曲直。縱橫圓研。虛實之勁。起落進退。閃展伸縮。變化之法。此皆為用也。此是與人相較之時。分析體用之意義也。若論形意拳本旨之體用。是自己練蹚子為之體。與人相較之時。按練時而應之為之用。也虛實變化不自專用。因彼之所發之形式。而生之也、

It says in the Boxing Classics: “Stillness is the fundamental form. In movement lies the function.” By being silent and still, then upon sensing anything, you connect with it. This is the function of neutral energy, of training spirit and returning to emptiness. The form and function of the obvious and hidden energies are in getting your whole body and every limb to relax. Spirit and energy shrink in and sink to your elixir field. Inside and outside merge to become a single continuum.

Then look with your eyes right into the opponent’s eyes or to his four limbs. When you are unmoving, this is the form. But as soon as you move, there is hardness and softness, bending and straightening, crissing and crossing, circling and grinding – these are the emptyings and fillings of energy. There is lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, evading and extending, extending and contracting – these are the variations of

technique. All of these form the function.

When you are competing with opponents, distinguish the meanings of form and function. To describe the original notions of form and function in Xingyi Boxing, going through the solo practice is the form, whereas competing with others and training in how to respond is the function. The transformations of empty and full are not a matter of your own design, but are to be generated by the postures brought forth by the opponent.

二則

[LI CUNYI SAID...] – Part 2

余練習拳學。一生不知用奸詐之心。先師亦常云兵不厭詐。自己雖不用奸詐。然而不可不防他人。終身未嘗有意一次用奸詐之勝人。皆以實在功夫也。若以奸詐勝人。彼未必肯心服也。奸詐心有何益哉。與人相較。總是光明正大。不能暗藏奸心。或是勝人。或是敗於人。心中自然明曉。皆能於道理有益也。雖然奸詐自己不用。亦不可不防。惟是彼之道理剛柔虛實巧拙不可不察也。此六字是道理中之變化也奸詐者不在道理之內用好言語將人暗中穩住用出其不意打人也剛者有明剛。有暗剛。柔者有明柔。有暗柔也。明剛者。未與人交手時。周身動作。神氣皆露於外。若是相較。彼一用力抓住吾手。如同鋼鈎一般。氣力似透於骨。自覺身體如同被人捆住一般。此是明剛中之內勁也。暗剛者。與人相較。動作如平常。起落動作亦極和順。兩手相交。彼之手指軟似棉。用意一抓。神氣不只透於骨髓。而且牽連心中如同觸電一般。此是暗剛中之內勁也。明柔者。視此人之形式動作。毫無氣力。若是知者視之。雖身體柔軟無有氣力。然而身體作動。身輕如羽。內外如一。神氣周身並無一毫散亂之處。與彼交手時。抓之似有。再用手或打或撞。而又似無。此人又毫不用意於己。此是明柔中之內勁也。暗柔者。視之神氣威嚴。如同泰山。若與人相較。兩手相交。其轉動如鋼球。手方到此人之身似硬。一用力打去。則彼身中又極靈活。手如同鰐膠相似。胳膊如同鋼絲條一般。能將人以黏住。或纏住。自己覺着諸方法不能得手。此人又無有一時格外用力。總是一氣流行。此是暗柔中之內勁也。此是余與人道藝相交。兩人相較之經驗也。以後學者若遇此四形式之人。量自己道理深淺。神氣之厚薄。而相較量。若是自己不能被彼之神氣欺住。可以與彼相較。若是覩面先被彼神氣罩住。自己先懼一頭。就不可與彼較量。若無求道之心則已。若有求道之心。只可虛心而恭敬之。以求其道也。兵法云。知己知彼。百戰百勝。能如此視人。能如此待人。可以能無敵於天下也。並非人人能勝方為英雄也。虛實巧拙者。是彼此兩人一覩面數言。就要相較。察彼之身形高矮。動作靈活。不靈活。又看彼之神氣厚薄。一動一靜言談之中。是內家是外家。先不可驟然取勝於人。先用虛手以探試之。等彼之動作。或虛或實。或巧或拙。一露形迹。勝敗可以知其大概矣。被人所敗不必言矣。若是勝於人亦是道理中之勝人也。就是被人所敗。亦不能用奸詐之心也。余所以練拳一生。總是以道服人也。以上諸先師亦常言之。亦是余一生所經驗之事也。以後學者。雖然不用奸詐。不可不防奸詐。莫學余忠厚。時常被人所欺也。

In my practice of boxing arts, I have never in my life understood the use of a treacherous mentality, but my teacher [Liu Qilan] often said: “In war, you can never cheat too much.”

Although you might make no use of treachery yourself, you must be prepared against it. All my life I never once had the idea of using treachery to defeat opponents, only of using honesty in the demonstrating of my skill. I figured that if I used treachery to defeat an opponent, he might not be convinced I had defeated him, in which case what is the use of a treacherous mind? When fighting with opponents, I was always honorable, unwilling to hide behind a treacherous mentality, whether defeating them or being defeated by them. What was in my mind was naturally shown and known, and I was always able to benefit from this principle.

Yet although you might make no use of treachery yourself, again you must be prepared against it. And so it is that the opponent’s theory, his hardness and softness, emptiness and fullness, skillfulness and clumsiness, must be examined. (Within these six words [hardness... clumsiness] is the principle of adapting. A treacherous person not working within this principle uses fine words to lull an opponent into a false sense of security and then strikes him when his guard is down.)

Hardness breaks down into obvious hardness and hidden hardness, and softness breaks down into obvious softness and hidden softness:

The obvious hardness –

When I have not yet made contact with the opponent, the movements of his whole body and the expressing of his spirit and energy are all revealed externally. If when we make contact he uses strength to seize my hand and it is like a steel hook, the strength penetrating into my bones, I become aware that my body seems to have been bound up by him. This is the internal power within obvious hardness.

The hidden hardness –

When fighting, the opponent's movements seem constant, and his actions of lifting and dropping are very smooth. When our hands cross, his fingers are as soft as cotton. Using intention to grab me, his spirit and energy not only penetrates to my bones, but connects to my center like an electric shock. This is the internal power within hidden hardness.

The obvious softness –

I see the opponent's posture and movements are completely without strength. When observed knowledgeably, although the opponent's body is soft and without strength, yet his body's movements are light as a feather, his inside and outside are as one, and his spirit, energy, and whole body are without the slightest bit of disorder anywhere. In fighting this kind of opponent, he seems to be there when I grab him, but then when I try to strike him, he seems to be gone. This person also seems to not be using any intention from himself. This is the internal power within obvious softness.

The hidden softness –

I see the opponent's manner is as dignified as Mt. Tai. In fighting with him, once our hands cross, he turns like a steel ball. When my hand touches his body, he seems very hard, but when I use strength to hit him, his body is then very supple. His hand like glue, his arm like a steel wire, he can stick to me and wrap me up. I am aware of everything that is going on but am unable to execute any techniques. For this person, there is no moment in which he is resisting outwardly or using exertion. It is always a continuous flow. This is the internal power within hidden softness.

These are the methods and skills of competing with an opponent in my experience of fighting. If you encounter these four types of opponent, estimate your own depth of theory, your own richness of spirit and energy, and then fight. If you are unable to be deceived by the opponent's spirit and energy, you can fight with him. If when looking at his face, his spirit and energy are shrouded and you are the first to show fear, then you are not ready to fight. If you are not of a mind to spy his method, it is already over. If you are of a mind to spy his method, you have to be reserved and modest in order to do it.

Sunzi said [*Art of War*, chapter 3]: “Knowing both yourself and your opponent, in a hundred battles you will have a hundred victories.” If you can by these means observe and await the opponent, you will be able to be invincible. And if no one can defeat you, then you will be called a hero. Emptiness and fullness, skillfulness and clumsiness – these are a few things to look for when facing an opponent and about to fight.

Observe the opponent's build and height, and whether his movement is nimble or not. Also look to see whether his spirit and energy are grand or feeble. With each movement, each stillness, each utterance, he is either of the internal school or the external school. You must not start off by trying to defeat him suddenly. First use a fake technique to try and find out more about him, the level of his movement, his emptiness, fullness, skillfulness, clumsiness. With each hint that is revealed, victory or defeat can be determined in general.

It is not necessary to discuss how you may be defeated by the opponent, for if you are defeated by him, it was with the principles by which you would have defeated him, in which case you were defeated by him simply

because you were unable to make use of the treacherous mentality. In practicing boxing throughout my life, I have therefore always used its methods to convince others. What is above is from what my teacher often used to say, as well as from my life’s experience. In your own studies, although you might make no use of treachery, you must be prepared against it. If you do not learn from what I have shared honestly, you will be frequently deceived by others.

一則
[TIAN JINGJIE SAID...]

田靜傑先生言形意拳術之理。本是不偏不倚。中正和平。自然一氣流行之道也。拳經云。身式不可前栽。不可後仰。不可左斜。不可右歪。即不偏不倚之意也其氣卷之則退藏於密。即丹田也放之則彌六合。心與意合。意與氣合。氣與力合。是內三合也。肩與胯合。肘與膝合。是內三合也。練之發着於十二形之中。十二形為萬形之綱也身體動作。因著形式有上下大小之分。動靜剛柔之判。起落進退之式。伸縮隱現之機也。雖然外體動作有萬形之分。而內運用一以貫之也。

The Xingyi Boxing art’s theory is based on neither leaning nor inclining, staying centered and balanced, and a method of natural and continuous flow. It says in the Boxing Classics: “Your body’s posture must not be leaning forward or back, nor tilting to either side.” This is the idea of neither leaning nor inclining.

Your energy is “rolled up and stored away tightly” (in your elixir field). When “releasing it, use all six unions” (i.e. mind united with intent, intent united with energy, and energy united with power – these being the three internal unions – as well as shoulder united with hip, elbow united with knee [and hand united with foot] – these being the three internal [external] unions) [Tian Jingjie’s interpretation of this *Zhong Yong* quote is completely different from the usage of it in the rest of this book – “Sending out, it goes beyond the ends of the universe (the ‘six unions’ originally meaning the six directions of north, south, east, west, up, down). Rolling in, it stores away tightly.” Furthermore, to not stray too far from the original context of the ancient text, it would possibly be more appropriate for these words to be applied to the use of intention rather than the operations of energy].

Practice expressing power through the twelve animals (these twelve techniques being the key to all techniques). Your body’s movements are to accord with the postures, which have separations of up and down, large and small, distinctions of movement and stillness, hard and soft, postures of lifting and dropping, advancing and retreating, and moments of expand and contract, conceal and reveal. Although the external movements take countless forms, the internal movement is a single principle running through it all.

一則
[LI KUIYUAN SAID...] – Part 1

李奎元先生云形意拳術之道。意者即人之元性也。在天地則為土。土者天地之性。性者人身之土也。在人則為性。在拳則為橫。橫者即拳中先天圓滿中和之一氣也。內包四德。即劈崩躡砲也。亦即真意也。形意者是人之周身四肢動作。從其規矩。順其自然。外不乖於形式。內不悖於神氣。外面形式之順。是內中神氣之和。外面形式之正。是內中意氣之中。是故見其外。知其內。誠於內。形於外。即內外合而為一者也。先賢云。得其一而萬事畢。此為形意拳術。形意二字大概之意義也。

坐功雖云靜極而生動。丹田之動。是外來之氣動。其實還是意動。羣陰剝盡一陽來復。是陰之靜極而生動矣。丹書練己篇云。己者我之真性。靜則為性。動則為意。妙用則為神也。不靜則真意不動。真意不動。而何有妙用乎。所以動者。是真意。練拳術到至善處。亦是性至靜。真意發動。而妙用即是神也。至於坐功靜極而動。採取

火候之老嫩。法輪升降之歸根。亦不外性靜意動。一神之妙用也。

In the method of the Xingyi boxing art, “intention” is simply primordial human nature. In the natural world, it is represented by the element of earth. The earth is the basic substance of the world. Our basic nature is the “earth” of our bodies. It is in people associated with their basic nature and in the boxing associated with the crossing technique. Within the boxing art, the crossing technique is the singleness of energy of an innate and complete centered harmoniousness. It contains within it the four other fundamental techniques – chopping, crashing, drilling, and blasting – and is the true intention. [As the core of Xingyi, it is the equivalent of Taiji’s “ward-off”.]

Xingyi is whole-bodied four-limbed movement in accordance with its standards and its naturalness. There is externally no contrariness in its posture and internally no contrariness in its spirit and energy. When the outward posture is at ease, the spirit and energy within are harmonized. When the outward posture is correct, then the spirit and energy within are balanced. Therefore when you see the outside, you know the inside, for when there is sincerity within, it manifests without, and this is what is meant by the inside and outside merging to become one. An ancient wise man said [*Zhuangzi*, chapter 12]: “Obtaining the One, all things are accomplished.” This is the “form” [all things] and “intent” [the One] of Xingyi [“Form & Intent”] Boxing in a nutshell.

In sitting meditation, while it is said that “stillness reaches its peak and gives rise to movement”, the movement of the elixir field which outwardly appears to be the breath moving is in fact still the intention moving. The packed-in passive aspect peels away entirely and then the active aspect begins to return. This is the passivity of stillness reaching its peak and giving rise to movement. The *Elixir Book*’s chapter on self-training says: “By ‘self’ is meant my true basic nature. Stillness is a matter of basic nature. Movement is a matter of intention. Subtlety is a matter of spirit.”

If I am not in a state of stillness, then it is not true intention that is going to be moving. If it is not true intention that is moving, then how is there going to be subtlety? Therefore what is intended by “movement” is true intention. When you have achieved the highest level in the practice of the boxing art, it is just that your nature has attained stillness, your true intention is expressing the movement, and there is subtlety of spirit. As for sitting meditation’s “stillness reaches its peak and gives rise to movement”, it is like the process of turning old back into new, a full rotation of the dharma wheel [i.e. energy going up your back along the Du (“command”) meridian and down your front along the Ren (“obey”) meridian], and is nothing more than your nature bestilling, your intention moving, and a spiritual subtlety.

二則

[LI KUIYUAN SAID...] – Part 2

練形意拳術。頭層明勁。垂肩墜肘塌腰。與寫字之工夫。往下按筆意思相同也。二層練暗勁。鬆勁往外開勁縮勁。各處之勁。與寫字提筆意思相同也。頂頭蹬足。是按中有提提。中有按也。三層練化勁。以上之勁。俱有而不覺有。只有神行妙用。與之隨意作草書者。意思相同也。其言拳之規則法度。神氣結構。轉折形質。與曾文正公家書論書字。言乾坤二卦。並禮樂之意者。道理亦相同也。

In practicing the Xingyi boxing art, the first level is obvious energy. Hang your shoulders, drop your elbows, collapse your waist. When you are practicing writing characters, it is the same idea as when you bring down the pen.

The second level is hidden energy. Relax the energy outward, expand the energy, shrink the energy. With each placing of energy, it is the same idea as in writing characters when you lift the pen. Press up with your

headtop and press down with your feet. Within pushing there is lifting, and within lifting there is pushing.

The third level is neutral energy, in which both of the above energies are and yet do not seem to be, for there is only spirit moving subtly. It is the same idea as in cursive writing when you do as you please. Within the standards of the boxing art, spirit and energy are integrated as you writhe through the postures. It is the same principle as in *Zeng Guofan's Letters Home* [published as a posthumous collection in 1879] in which he discusses calligraphy [in a letter from 1841], saying “[Everything comes from] the two trigrams of Qian and Kun”, and talks of their relation to ritual and music [Kun (“Receptive”) being the structure within ritual, Qian (“Creative”) being the expression within music (thus aligning with the “form & intent”)].

三則

[LI KUIYUAN SAID...] – Part 3

形意拳術之道。勿拘於形式。亦不可專務於形式。二者皆非正道。先師云。法術規矩在假師傳。道理巧妙須自己悟會。故練拳術者。不可以練偏僻奇異之形式。而身為其所拘。亦不可以練散亂無章之拳術。而不能通其道。所以練拳術者。先要求明師。得良友。心思會悟。身體力行。日日習練。不可間斷。方能有得也。不如是。混混沌沌一生。茫然無所知也。俗語云。世上無難事。就怕心不專。世人皆云拳術道理深遠不好求。實則不然。中庸云。道不遠人。人之為道而遠人。天地之間。萬物之理。皆道之流行分散耳。人為一小天地。亦天地間之一物也。故我身中之陰陽。即天地之陰陽也。萬物之理。亦即我身中之理也。大學注云心在內。而理周乎物物在外而理具於心。易注云。遠在六合以外。近在一身之中。遠取諸物。近取諸身。天地之大。六合之遠。萬物之理。莫不在我一身之中。其拳始言一理。即形意拳中之太極三體式之起點也。中散為萬事。即陰陽五行十二形。以至各形之理無微不至也。末復合為一理者。即各形之理。總而合之內外如一也。放之則彌六合者。即身體形式伸展。內中神氣放開。圓滿無缺也。高者如同極於天也。遠者如至六合之外也。卷之則退藏於密者。即神氣縮至於丹田。至虛至無之意義也。遠取諸物者。譬如蛇之一物。曲屈夭矯。來去如風。吾欲取其意也。近取諸身者。若練蛇形須研究其形。是五行拳中。即劈崩躡砲橫也何行合化而生出此形之勁也。勁者。即內中神氣貫通之氣也。所以要看此形之行動。頭尾身。伸縮盤旋三節一氣。無一毫之勉強也。物之性能柔中有剛。剛中有柔。柔者。如同絲帶相似。剛者。纏住別物之體。如鋼絲相似。再將物之形式動作。靈活曲折剛柔之理。而意會之。再自己身體力行而效之。工久自然得着此物之形式性能。與我之性能合而為一矣。此形之性能。格物通了。再格物他形之性能。十二形之理亦然。以至於萬形之理。只要一動一靜。驟然視見。與我之意相感。忽覺與我身中之道相合。即可倣倣此物之動作。而運用之。所以練拳術者。宜虛心博問。不可自是。余昔年與人相較槍拳之時。即敗於人之手。然而又借此他勝我之法術。而得明我所練之道理也。是故拳術即道理。道理即拳術。天地萬物無不可效法也。即世人亦無不可作我之師與友也。所以余幼年練拳術。性情異常剛愎。總覺己高於人。自拜郭雲深先生。為師教授形意拳術。得着門徑。又得先生循循善誘。自己用功。晝夜不斷。又得良友相助。忽然豁然明悟。心闊似海。回思昔日所練所行。諸事皆非。自覺心中愧悔。毛髮悚懼。自此而知古人云。求聖求賢在於己。功名富貴在於命。練拳術者。關於人之一生禍福。後學者不可不知也。自此以後不敢言己之長。議人之短。知道理之無窮。俗云強中自有強中手。能人背後有能人。心中戰戰兢兢。須臾不敢離此道理。一生亦不敢驕矜於人也

In the method of the Xingyi boxing art, do not be restricted by the posture nor fixate on the posture. Both are the incorrect method. My teacher [Guo Yunshen] said: “The methods and standards come from your teacher’s transmission, while the principles and skills will depend on your own awakening. Because of this, you must not practice bizarre postures, which would restrict your body, but you also must not practice in a disorganized and unstructured way, which would render you incapable of understanding the method.”

Therefore to train in the art, you should first seek out and befriend a good teacher. For your mind to grasp it and your body to perform it well, practice daily without a break, and then you will obtain it. If it is not thus, it will be a mess your whole life, a vagueness without understanding in any part. A common saying goes: “When

there are no problems in the world, a worrying mind becomes unfocused.”

Everyone is of the opinion that the art’s theory is too deep and distant to seek, but in fact this is not so. The *Zhong Yong* says: “The Way is not far from people. It is their expectation of the Way that distances them from it.” Between sky and ground lies the underlying principle of all things, for the activity of the Way disperses through them all. A person is a small universe, a substance between sky and ground. Therefore the passive and active aspects within our bodies are the passive and active aspects of sky [active] and ground [passive]. The principle in things is also the principle within ourselves.

A commentary to the *Da Xue* says: “The mind is internal, yet its reasoning extends to all things. Things are external, yet their principles are all there in the mind.” A commentary to the *Book of Changes* says: “It goes farther than the ends of the universe, nearer than the center of one’s own body. For what is distant, observe all things. For what is near, examine within the self.” The greatness of sky and ground, the farness of the six directions, and the principle in all things, are all within our bodies.

The boxing begins with a single principle, which is the starting point within Xingyi Boxing of the grand polarity and the three-substance posture. That posture disperses into all activities that follow – the passive and active aspects, the five elements, and the twelve animals. Addressing the individual principles of each posture, not the smallest feature of them goes untouched, and they each finish by merging again with the single underlying principle, so that the principle of each posture is that they all combine internal and external into one.

“Sending out, it goes beyond the ends of the universe.” When your body posture extends and spreads out, your spirit and energy within open up so as to be complete and without gaps, going higher than the sky, farther than the horizon. “Rolling in, it stores away tightly.” When your spirit and energy withdraw into your elixir field, the idea is to attain perfect emptiness.

“For what is distant, observe all things.” Take for example the snake. It bends and twists, coming and going like the wind, and I wish to catch its intention. “For what is near, examine within the self.” Like studying the snake’s form to practice the snake technique, so too with the five elements techniques – namely chopping, crashing, drilling, blasting, and crossing – examine how they change each other and give rise to each other’s power. [To add clarity, the “far & near” difference here is that to practice the animals we must look outward and observe animals, whereas to practice the elements we must look inward and contemplate concepts.]

Power is when the energy of spirit is flowing through within. If you want to consider the operations of these techniques, from beginning to end and in between, there is extending, contracting, and coiling, making three sections of a single flow, and without even slightly forcing it to happen.

In the natural ability of animals, there is hardness within softness and softness within hardness. The softness is like a silk ribbon, and the hardness is like when it is tightly wound up to be like a steel wire. An animal’s movements have the principles of being nimble and lively, bending and folding, hard and soft, all these ideas gathered together.

My own physical performance was affected, and after working at it for a long time, I organically achieved the form and natural abilities of the animals, which merged with my own natural abilities to become unified. To get an animal’s natural ability, study the animal until you understand it thoroughly, then move on studying the natural abilities of the rest of the animals. When the principle of the twelve animals is thus, you will have attained the underlying principle of all things.

It should be that in every movement and stillness, the moment I see something suddenly happening, my intention is affected by it. Suddenly aware, the method in my body merges with what is happening, and then I can imitate an animal’s movement and apply it. Therefore to practice boxing arts, you should open your mind and expand your inquiry, and must not just rely on yourself.

Many years ago, whenever I competed with others, whether using spear or fists, I was defeated by their techniques. Then by means of the methods they used to gain victory over me, I obtained a clarity about the principles of what I was practicing. It turned out that the boxing art is the theory and the theory is the boxing art. Everything in the world can provide an example to follow, and everyone in it can be my teachers and friends.

When practicing boxing arts in my youth, my temperament was unusually headstrong and I always felt myself to be better than others. I did obeisance to Guo Yunshen for instruction and he taught me the art of Xingyi Boxing, not just giving me access to it, but also teaching me patiently and systematically. I worked hard day and night without a break, but because we also had a good friendship in which we assisted each other, I experienced a sudden illumination and my mind was as broadened as the ocean.

I thought back to what I had trained in former days, and it was all wrong. I felt in my mind such shame and regret that my hairs stood up in horror. From that point I understand these ancient words: “Seeking out the wise and worthy is up to you, but getting fame and fortune is a matter of fate.” Students of boxing arts must understand this when regarding human fortune or misfortune. I henceforth no longer dared to talk of my own greatness or discuss the shortcomings of others, for I understood the nondiscriminating nature of the principle. As is commonly said: “As strong as you may be, there’s someone stronger. When a skilled person turns around, there’s another skilled person there.” Be vigilant in your mind, do not dare to depart from the principle for an instant, and for your whole life never dare to be arrogant toward others.

四則

[LI KUIYUAN SAID...] – Part 4

形意拳之道。練之有無數之曲折層次。亦有無數之魔力混亂。一有不察。拳中無數之弊病出焉。故練者。先以心中虛空為體。以神氣相交為用。以腰為主宰。以丹田為根。以三體式為基礎。以九要之規模。為練拳之具。以五行十二形為拳中之物。故將所發出散亂之氣。順中用逆縮回。歸於丹田。用呼吸煅煉。不用口鼻呼吸。要用真息積於丹田。口中之呼吸。舌頂上腭。口似張非張。似脰非脰。還照常呼吸。不可有一毫之勉強。要純任自然耳。所以要除三害。挺胸。提腹。努氣。是練形意拳之大弊病也。或有練的規矩不合自己不知。身形亦覺和順。心中亦覺自如。然而練至數年工夫。拳術之內外不覺有進步。以通者觀之。是入於俗派自然之魔力也。或有練者。手足動作亦整齊。內外之氣亦合的住。以傍人觀之。周身之力量。看著亦極大無窮。自覺亦復如是。惟是與人相較。放在人家之身上。不覺有力。知者云。是被拘魔所捆也。因兩肩根。兩胯裏根。不舒展。不知內開外合之故也。如此雖練一生身體不能如羽毛之輕靈也。又有時常每日練習身形亦和順。心中亦舒暢。忽然一朝。身形練着亦不順。腹中覺著亦不合。所練的姿式起落進退亦覺不對。而心中時覺鬱悶。知者云。是到疑團之地也。其實拳術確有進步。此時不可停工。千萬不可被疑魔所阻。即速求師說明道理而練去。用力之久。而一旦豁然貫通。則眾物之表裏精粗之無不到。而吾拳之全體大用無不明矣。至此諸魔盡去。道理不能有所阻也。邱祖云。經一番魔力。長一層福力也。

In the method of Xingyi Boxing, the training is multi-faceted and multi-layered, but it also comes with countless curses and confusions. If one does not scrutinize, then countless errors in the boxing will emerge. Right from the beginning of the training, emptying the mind is the form, the intersecting of spirit and energy is the function, the waist is the commander, the elixir field is the source, the three-substance posture is the foundation, the rules of the nine requirements are the tools for training, and the five elements and twelve animals are the material within the boxing art.

When the energy you are expressing is disorganized, then although following along, you will be resistantly contracting. Return it to your elixir field and use your breath to temper it. This is not the breath of nose or

mouth, but the true breath that accumulates in the elixir field. As for your mouth when breathing, your tongue touches the upper palate, and your lips seem flattened but not flattened, pursed but not pursed. As with ordinary breathing, there must not be the slightest bit of effort to make it happen, for it should be pure and natural.

It is important to eliminate the three harms: sticking out your chest, lifting your abdomen, forcing the energy. [The three harms are mentioned in Sun’s 1917 Bagua manual, but are slightly different: 1. forcing the energy, 2. using clumsy effort, 3. sticking out your chest and lifting your abdomen. In this book, mention is made of “the three harms” also by two other Xingyi teachers, Guo Yunshen and Xu Zhan’ao, so it is likely intended as the same version Li Kuiyuan uses here rather than Sun’s Bagua version.] These are the greatest errors when practicing Xingyi Boxing.

Sometimes you will not be conforming to the standards of practice but will be unaware of it. Your body posture with feel harmonious and your mind will feel unhindered, but after you have worked at it for several years, you will not feel that your boxing art, internally or externally, has made progress or that any breakthrough has been seen. In this case, you have gone down the crude and ordinary road of demonic strength [as opposed to spiritual power].

Sometimes for a practitioner, the movements of his hands and feet are in good order, and his internal and external energies have combined, then someone nearby will make an observation that he has a whole-bodied strength and that it is visibly mighty and inexhaustible. Once conscious of this, he will continue to practice as he has been, except that while competing, he does not notice upon making contact with the opponent’s body that he is using force. A wise man has called this “being trussed up by restrictive demons”. Because the practitioner’s shoulders and hips are not relaxed and opened up, he will be not aware if he is inwardly expanding and outwardly contracting. If you do it this way, then even if you practice your whole life, your body will not be able to have the nimbleness of being light as a feather.

It may also be for you in your daily practice that your body postures are harmonious and your mind is at ease, but then suddenly one day your body posture is no longer harmonious, or something inside just does not feel right, or that when training the postures, something about it, be it the lifting and dropping, or advancing and retreating, does not feel correct, and then within your mind you will feel depressed. A wise man has called this “finding yourself in a maze of doubts”. This is actually the point in the art when you are making true progress, and so at this time you must not stop working at it and absolutely must not let those demons of doubt hinder you, but immediately seek a teacher who will explain the theory, and then get on with practicing it.

If you work at it ardently for a long time, then one day it will suddenly all make sense, and all the parts, inside and outside, in details and generalities, will be achieved, and the full form and function of our boxing art will be clear. At this point, all your demons will have been exorcised, and the theory can no longer be obstructed. In the words of Qiu Chuji: “Every instance of quelling your demons gives you an increase in strength of character.”

一則

[GENG CHENGXIN SAID...]

耿誠信先生云。幼年練習拳術之時。肝火太盛。血氣甚旺。往往與人無故不相和。視同道如仇敵。自己常常自煩自惱。此身為拙勁所拘。不知自己有多大力量。有友人介紹深州劉奇蘭先生。拜伊為門下。先生云。此形意拳。是變化氣質之道。復還於初。非是求後天血氣之力也。自練初步明勁之工夫。四五年之時。自覺周身之氣質。腹內之性情。與前大不相同。回思昔年所作之事。對於人所發之性情言語。時時心中甚覺愧悔。自此而後。習練暗勁。又五六年。身中內外之景況。與練明勁之時。又不同矣。每見同道之人。無不相合。遇有技術在我以上者。

亦無不稱揚之。此時自己心中之技術。還有一點吝嗇之心。不肯輕示於人。嗣又遷於化勁。習之又至五六年工夫。由身體內外剛柔相合之勁。而漸化至於無物。至此方覺。腹內空空洞洞。渾渾淪淪。無形無象。無我無他之境矣。自此方無有彼此之分。門戶之見。遇有同道者。無所不愛。或有練習未及於道者。無不憐憫而欲教之。偶遇同道之人相比較者。並無先存一個打人之心在內。所用所發皆是道理。亦無入而不自得矣。此時方知形意拳是個中和之道理。所以能變化人之氣質。而入於道也。

When I practiced boxing arts in my youth, my liver fire was overfull and my vigor was excessive [i.e. I was both touchy and hyper]. I was often out of harmony with other people for no reason and looked upon my fellows as foes. I was usually annoyed and irritated with myself, contorting my body with clumsy effort, not knowing my own strength.

A friend recommended Liu Qilan of Shen Prefecture, and so I did obeisance to Liu for instruction. He told me: “Xingyi Boxing is a method for transforming the temperament. It returns you to what is innate and does not strive for the vigorous strength that is acquired.”

From the beginning of training to skill with the obvious energy took me about four or five years, and then I became aware of my body’s tendencies and my temperament within, and how it was completely different from what it had formerly been. I recalled how I used to behave and the abrasive words I had expressed to other people, and I kept it all in mind with shame and regret.

From that point, I practiced the hidden energy. After another five or six years, the condition of my body, inside and out, was different again from what it had become from training the obvious energy. Whenever I saw my comrades, I was always in harmony with them, and whenever I encountered someone who was more skilled than myself, I always praised him. As to my attitude toward my own skill at this time, I became in a sense miserly, for I was unwilling any longer to casually show off.

Then I shifted to the neutral energy and worked at that for another five or six years. I allowed my body inside and out to blend its hard and soft energies, gradually blurring until they were finally indistinct from one another. Upon reaching this condition, I felt within myself an emptiness and a purity, a state of being formless and imageless, of being without a sense of an “I” or a “he”. From then on, there was then no longer a distinction between self and opponent, no kind of bias.

When I met with comrades, there was no one I did not cherish, and if I met someone who was not yet at this level, I always pitied him and wanted to teach him how to get to it. When I happened to compete with my comrades, there was no idea in my mind of being the first to attack. Everything I applied was purely rational, and hence “there was no situation in which I did not succeed”. I now understood that Xingyi Boxing is a method of centered harmoniousness and that it can therefore transform one’s temperament, bringing one to the Way.

一則

[ZHOU MINGTAI SAID...]

周明泰先生云。形意拳之道。練體之時。周身要活動。不可拘束。拳經云。十六處練法之中。雖有四就之說。就者束身也。束身非拘也。是將身縮住。內開外合雖往回縮。外形之式要舒展。順中有逆。逆中有順。是故形意拳之道。內中之神氣。要中正相交。外形之姿式。要和順不悖。所以練體之時。周身內外不要拘束也。練體之時。不可拘束。然而所用之時。外形亦不可有散亂之式。內中不可有驕懼之心。就是遇武術至淺之人。或遇不識武術之人。內中不可有驕傲之心存。亦不可以一手法必勝他人。務要先將自己之兩手。或虛或實。要靈活不可拘力。兩足之進退。要便利不可停滯。或一二手。式三五手不拘。將伊之虛實真情引出。再因時而進之。可以能勝他人也。倘若遇武術高超之人。知其工夫極深。亦見其身體動作神形相合。己心中亦贊美伊之工夫。亦不可生恐懼之心。務要將神氣貫注。兩目視定伊之兩眼之順逆。再視伊之兩手兩足或虛實。或進退相交之時。彼進我退。彼退

我進。彼剛我柔。彼短我長。彼長我短。亦得量彼之真假靈實而應之。不可拘定一成法而必勝於人也。如此用法。雖然不能勝於彼。亦不能一交手。即敗於彼也。故練拳術之道。不可自負其能。無敵於天下也。亦不可有恐懼心之。不敢與人相較也。所以務要知己知彼知己不知彼。不能勝人。知彼而不知己。亦不能勝人。故能知己知彼。可以能勝人。而亦能成為大英雄之名也。

In the Xingyi Boxing method of training the body, the whole body should be moving and must not be restricted. In the “sixteen part training method” discussed within the Boxing Classics [see Chapter Seven below], although the fourth one, “bringing in”, is defined as “binding up your body”, this does not mean being restrictive, it simply means making your body shrink in. Internally expand and externally contract. Although there is shrinking in, the external posture should be stretched out. Going along contains going against, and going against contains going along.

In the method of Xingyi Boxing, your spirit and energy should be balanced and interconnected, and the external postures should be harmonious rather than contrary. Therefore when training your body, your whole body should not be restricted, either inside or out. However, although there must be no restrictiveness when training your body, the outward postures must not be disorganized when they are applied, and within there must be neither arrogance nor fear.

If you meet a martial artist who has reached only a shallow level, or if you meet someone who knows nothing about martial arts, you must harbor no conceit within, nor think that you will defeat others with a single move. You must first make your own hands one empty and one full. You should be nimble and must not use restrictive force. The advancing and retreating of your feet should be easy and must not be stagnant. Whether one or two techniques, or three or five, it does not matter. By drawing out the truth of the opponent’s emptiness or fullness and then advancing according to the moment, you will be able to defeat him.

If you encounter a martial arts expert and you know his skill is at a very deep level, and you see his body movements are united in spirit and posture, and within your mind you are praising his skill, yet you must not give rise to fear. You must concentrate your spirit and energy. Watch his eyes for his going along and going against, then observe his hands and feet, his empty and full, his advance and retreat.

During a competition: when he advances, I retreat, and when he retreats, I advance; when he hardens, I soften, [and when he softens, I harden]; when he shortens, I lengthen, and when he lengthens, I shorten. I also get the measure of when he is real or faking, of whether he is being cunning or obvious, and then respond accordingly. As long as I do not get stuck in a fixed pattern, I will assuredly win.

If you do it in this way, then even if you are unable to defeat or even compete with an opponent, it is because of him [i.e. not because you are training wrong, but simply because he happens to be better]. Therefore when training in the methods of boxing arts, you must not be arrogant about your abilities and think you are invincible, and yet you must also not be fearful, never daring to compete with opponents. Thus it is that you must know both self and opponent. If you know yourself but do not understand him, you will not be able to defeat him. If you understand him but do not know yourself, again you will not be able to defeat him. But if you can know both self and opponent, you will not only be able to defeat him, but might even gain a heroic reputation.

一則

[XU ZHAN’AO SAID...] – Part 1

許占鰲先生云。練形意拳之道。萬不可有輕忽易視之心。五行十二形。以為七日學一形。或十日學一形。大約少者半年。可以學完。多者一年之工夫足以學完全矣。如此練形意拳。至於終身不能有所得也。所會者。不過拳之

形式與皮毛耳。或者又知此拳之道理精微。不易得之於身。而有畏難之心。總疑一形兩形。大約三年五年。亦不能得其精微。若於全形之道理。大約終身亦得不完全矣。二者有一。雖然習練。始終不能有成也。二者若是全無。再虛心求老師傳授。第一三害之病不可有。第二九要之規矩要真切。第三三體式要多站。九要要整齊。身子外形要中正。心中要虛空。神氣呼吸要自然。形式要和順。不如此。不能開手開步練習也。若是誠意練習。總要勿求速效。一日不和順。明日再站。一月不和順。下月再站。因三體式是變化人之氣質之始。並非要求血氣之力。是去自己之病耳。拙氣拙力之病所以站三體式者。有遲速不等。因人之氣質稟受不同也。至於開手開步練習一形不順不能練他形。一月不順。下月再練。半年不順一年練。練至身體和順。再練他形。非是形式不熟。亦是內中之氣質未變化耳。一形通順再練他形。自易通順。而其餘各形皆可一氣貫通。拳經云。一通無不通也。所以練形意拳者。勿求速效。勿生厭煩之心。務要有恆。作為自己一生始終修身之工課。不管效驗。不效驗如此練去。工夫自然而有得也。

In practicing the method of Xingyi Boxing, you must never have a flippant or distractible mind. In the case of its five elements and twelve animals, by spending a mere seven to ten days on a single technique, some could learn the whole system in about six months, and most could get through it all in a year. But if you learn Xingyi Boxing in this way, you could do it your whole life and you still would not get it, for what would have been grasped would only be a superficial knowledge of the boxing postures. Perhaps you would even come to deeply understand this boxing art's theory, yet still it would not be easy for you to achieve it in your body, and since you would also have an attitude that makes you shy away from such difficulties, you would always be in doubt over some of the postures.

If you instead were to give it around three to five years, you would still not be able to obtain its refined subtleties. Even if you have the theory for all the postures, you could probably spend your whole life on it and still obtain something only incomplete. Both of these situations amount to the same thing, for despite practicing, you would always be unable to complete it. In either case, if nothing at all has been obtained, then open your mind and seek out a teacher for instruction.

Firstly, you must not have the errors of the three harms. Second, the standards of the nine requirements should be clearly delineated. Third, the three-substance posture should be stood in frequently. The nine requirements should be orderly, your body's external shape should be balanced, your mind should be empty, your bearing and breathing should be natural, and the posture should be harmonious. If it is not done in this way, you will be unable to move on to practicing the hand movements and stepping.

To sincerely practice, you should never seek quick results. If after one day the posture is not harmonious, then the next day try again, and if not after one month, then for the next month try again. Because the three-substance posture is the beginning of transforming your temperament and does not require an animal strength, it rids you of your errors (such as the errors of awkward energy or awkward effort). When it comes to standing in the three-substance posture, some need to do it over a longer period and some are quicker, and the time it takes is not consistent because each person's disposition is different.

Once you have reached the point of practicing with your hands and feet moving, then if you do not have fluency with the first posture, you cannot move on to another posture. If after a month you are not fluent with it, then repeat the training for the following month. If after half a year you are still not fluent with it, then train it for the whole year. Train it until your body has fluency, and then move on to the next posture. It should not be that you are still unfamiliar with the posture or that your temperament within is untransformed.

Train a single posture until you have fluency with it and then move on to another one. Go from ease to fluency, and then you can go continuously through the rest of the postures. It says in the Boxing Classics: "Understanding one, you will understand all." Therefore in practicing Xingyi Boxing, do not expect quick results and do not have a quitting attitude. You must be persevering. Make it your lifelong task of personal cultivation,

regardless of whether or not you get your desired results. If you train in this way, skillfulness will naturally be obtained.

二則

[XU ZHAN’AO SAID...] – Part 2

形意拳術三體式者。天地人三才之象也。即人身中之頭手足也。亦即形意八卦太極拳三派合一之體也。此式自虛而生一氣。是自靜而動也。太極兩儀至於三體式。是由動而靜也。再致虛極靜篤時。還於本性。此性是先天之性。不是後天之性。此是形意拳術之本體也。此三體式。非是後天拙力血氣所為。乃是拳中之規矩。傳授而致也。此是拳術最初還虛之道也。此理與靜坐之工相合也。靜坐要最初還虛。俟虛極靜篤時。海底而生知覺。要動而後覺。是先天動。不可知而後動。知後而動。是後天妄想而生動也。俟一陽動時。即速回光返照。凝神入於氣穴。神氣相交。二氣合成一氣。再有傳授。文武火候老嫩。呼吸得法。能以煅煉。進退升降亦可以次而行工也。因此是最初還虛。血氣不能加於其內。心中空空洞洞。即是明心見性矣。前者自虛無。至三體式。是由靜而動。動而復靜。是拳中起躡落翻之未發。謂之中也。中者。是未發之和也。三體式重生萬物張者。是靜極而再動。此是起躡落翻已發也。已發是拳之橫拳起也。內中之五行拳。十二形拳。以致萬形。皆由此而生也。中庸云。天命之謂性率性之謂道不動。是未發之中也。動作能循環三體式之本體。是已發之和也。和者是已發之中也將所練之拳術。有過由不及之氣質。仰而就。仰而止。教人改變氣質復歸於中。是之謂教也。故形意拳之內勁。是由此中和而生也。俗語云。拳中之內勁。是鼓小腹硬如堅石。非也。所以形意拳之內勁。是人之元神元氣相合。不偏不倚。和而不流。無過不及。自無而有。自微而著。自小而大。由一氣之動。而發於周身。活活潑潑。無物不有。無時不然。中庸云放之則彌六合。卷之則退藏於密。其味無窮。皆是拳之內勁也。善練者。玩索而有得焉。則終身用之。有不能盡者矣。三體式。無論變更何形。非禮不動。禮即拳中之規矩姿式也所以修身也。故一動一靜。一言一默。行止坐臥。皆有規矩。所以此道動作。是純任自然。非免強而作也。古人云。內為天德。外為王道。並非霸術所行。亦是此拳之意義也。

The Xingyi boxing art’s three-substance posture is a model of the “three substances” – sky, ground, and mankind – which in the body are the head [sky], hands [mankind], and feet [ground]. It is also the three boxing systems of Xingyi [ground], Bagua [sky], and Taiji [mankind] merged into a single essence. In this posture, a single energy is born from emptiness – from stillness there is movement. From the state of grand polarity arises the dual aspects [passive/active], and then there is the three-substance posture – from movement there is stillness. Upon reaching the peak of emptiness and stillness, you have returned to your fundamental condition, which is your innate condition, not your acquired condition. This is the Xingyi boxing art’s foundation.

This three-substance posture is not something of acquired clumsy-strengthened vigor. It remains the standard within the art as it has been passed down to us and is the principle in boxing arts of “begin by returning to emptiness”, the same principle as in seated meditation [as is said in the *Elixir Book*]: “In seated meditation, you should begin by returning to emptiness.” While awaiting full emptiness and stillness, awareness is born at the root chakra. There should be movement and then awareness of it. This is innate movement. There cannot be knowledge of it and then movement, for that is acquired movement, a contrivance of movement. [In martial terms, the “innate” quality is that if you do not know what you are going to do, neither does your opponent and you will catch him unawares, whereas the “acquired” or “contrived” quality is that if you know what you are going to do before you do it, you will just give yourself away.]

When there is finally movement of your active aspect, this will suddenly turn your light upon yourself, concentrating spirit into your energy points. With spirit and energy intersecting, two energies are merging to make a single energy. There will then be the teachings of the civil and martial aspects, as well as the process of turning old energy back into new, which can be refined once your breathing is correct, and then forward and

back, up and down, you will be able to go step by step through the training.

Because of “begin by returning to emptiness”, vigor can add nothing to it, for the mind is now empty within, as in the saying that “it is the clear mind that perceives nature”. First go from emptiness to the three-substance posture, which is to go from stillness to movement and then from movement back to stillness. Within the boxing art, it is before lifting, drilling, dropping, and overturning are expressed, and it is called “centering”.

Being centered is the harmony of not yet expressing. Then from the three-substance posture, “all things are born and raised”. When stillness reaches its peak there is movement, which is the lifting, drilling, dropping, and overturning being expressed, meaning the initiating of the crossing technique. The three-substance posture is within the five elements techniques and twelve animals techniques. It extends to every posture, and they all come from it. The *Zhong Yong* says: “Our nature comes from Nature. To accord with our nature is the Way.” Stillness is the centeredness of not yet expressing, movement circulated from the three-substance posture is the harmony of expressing, and harmony is the centeredness of expressing.

When practicing boxing arts, mistakes come from an unattaining kind of temperament. Such a person admires for a while and then is satiated, admires for a while and then quits. A teacher who transforms your temperament and returns you to being centered – that one is a teacher.

The internal power of Xingyi Boxing is born of centered harmoniousness. A common saying goes: “The boxing art’s ‘internal power’ means stimulating your belly until it is as hard as a rock.” This is wrong. Xingyi Boxing’s internal power is a person’s primordial spirit and primordial energy merged together. It does not wander off-center. It harmonizes without wavering. It does not go too far nor not far enough. It goes from nothing to something, from the abstract to the tangible, from the small to the large. It goes from the rousing of a singleness of energy to expressing with the whole body. It is a liveliness, everywhere, all the time. The *Zhong Yong* says: “Sending out, it goes beyond the ends of the universe. Rolling in, it stores away tightly. It is infinitely delightful.” All of this describes the boxing art’s internal power. A good practitioner will ponder on it and thereby obtain it, and then he will use it for his whole life, unable to exhaust it.

Regardless of whatever posture the three-substance posture changes into, without the ritual, there is no movement (ritual indicating the act of being in the posture that sets the standard within the boxing art), for it is the cultivation of the self. Therefore with each movement and each stillness, with each utterance and each silence, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, all will be correct, and this method of movement will be pure and natural, rather than forced to happen. Someone long ago said: “Inwardly – the virtue of nature. Outwardly – the way of kings. And never – the behavior of tyrants.” This is also the intent of this boxing art.

第五章 八卦拳

CHAPTER FIVE: BAGUA BOXING

一則

[CHENG TINGHUA SAID...]

程廷華先生云。練八卦拳之道。先得明師傳授。曉拳中之意義。並先後之次序。其實八卦。本是一氣變化之分。一氣者即太極也一氣仍是八卦四象兩儀之合。是故太極之外無八卦。八卦兩儀四象之外。亦無太極也。所以一氣八卦為其體。六十四變。以及七十二暗足。互為其用。體亦謂之用。用亦謂之體。體用一源。動靜一道。遠在六合以外。近在一身之中。一動一靜。一言一默。莫不有卦象焉。莫不有體用焉。亦莫不有八卦之道焉。其道至

大。而無不包。其用至神。而無不存。若是言練。先曉伸縮旋轉圓研之理。先以身縮而言之。縮者是由高而縮於矮。由前而縮於後。從高而縮於矮之情形。身子如同縮至於深淵從前而縮於後之意思。身體如同縮至於深窟。若是論身體伸長而言之。伸者自身體縮至極矮極微處。再往上伸去如同手捫於天。往遠伸去。又同手探於海角。此是拳中開合抽長之精意。古人云。其大無外。其小無內。放之則彌六合。卷之則退藏於密。所以八卦拳之道。無內外也。研者轉身如同幾微的螺絲細軸一般。身體有研轉之形。而內中之軸。無離此地之意也。旋轉者。是放開步法邁足望着圓圈一旋轉。如身體轉九萬里之地球一圈之意也。至於身體剛柔。如玲瓏透體活活潑潑。流行無滯。又內中規矩。的的確確不易。胳膊百練之純鋼。化為繞指之柔。兩足動作。皆勾股三角。兩手之運用。又合弧切八線所以數不離理。理不離數。理數兼該。乃得萬全也。將此道得之於身心。可以獨善其身。亦可以兼善天下。身之所行。是孝弟忠信。無事口中可以常念阿彌陀佛。行動不離聖賢之道。心中亦不離仙佛之門。非知此。不足以言練八卦拳術也。亦非如此。不能得著八卦拳之妙道也。

To practice the method of Bagua Boxing, first find a knowledgeable teacher to instruct you who knows the meaning within the boxing art and the order of the sequence.

What it all comes down to is that Bagua [“eight trigrams”] is a single energy transforming into distinct parts. (The single energy means the grand polarity.) The single energy remains merged with the eight trigrams, four manifestations, and dual aspects. Therefore without the grand polarity, there are no eight trigrams, and without the eight trigrams, dual aspects, and four manifestations, there is no grand polarity.

The single energy and the eight trigrams are its form, and the sixty-four changes and seventy-two hidden foot techniques make up its function. Form is also to be considered function, and function is also to be considered form, for form and function have a single source, movement and stillness a single method. It goes farther than the ends of the universe, nearer than the center of your own body. In each movement and each stillness, each utterance and each silence, everything has its trigram representation, all have form and function, and all have the method of Bagua. When its method has reached greatness, it embraces everything. When its application has attained spirituality, it contains everything.

If you want to discuss the training, it starts with understanding the principles of extending, shrinking, revolving, and grinding.

Let us first discuss shrinking. Shrinking is when you shrink from tall to short, or from front to back. For the manner of shrinking from tall to short, your body is as if it is shrinking down into an abyss. As to the idea of shrinking from front to back, your body is as if it is shrinking back into a cave.

Let us move on to extending, which is when you go from your body having shrunk to its limit of shortness or smallness and extend up as if to touch the sky or away as if to reach the sea. This is the essential idea of expanding and contracting within the boxing art. It was said by ancient men [from *Guanzi*, chapter 36 / then from *Zhong Yong*]: “It is so big it has no outside, so small it has no inside.” / “Sending out, it goes beyond the ends of the universe. Rolling in, it stores away tightly.” So it is that the method of Bagua Boxing has no inside or outside.

Grinding means to turn your body as if slightly corkscrewing or pivoting. When your body does a grinding turn, it pivots inside with the intention of not leaving the ground.

Revolving means to pick up your foot and step in a curve to turn all the way around, having an intention of your torso rotating as if the full circumference of the Earth.

Attaining in your body both hardness and softness is like a quick-wittedness manifesting throughout your body. You have a liveliness, flowing without stagnation, and yet the standards within it are really unchanging. Your arms after much training become hard, then transform toward softness.

When your feet move, always hook the thighs in to make a triangle. When your hands move, they unite in arcs cut into the eight lines [i.e. up, down, left, right, upper left, lower right, upper right, lower left]. Thus the

count does not depart from the theory, the theory does not depart from the count, but theory and count concur with each other, and thereby it is complete.

By this means, the method is obtained in both body and mind and you can perfect yourself as well as benefit the world, for the conduct of the self is: filiality, respect, loyalty, and trustworthiness. Even without using your mouth, you can constantly chant the Buddha’s name. In your conduct, do not depart from the ways of the wise and virtuous. In your thinking, do not depart from the teachings of the immortals and buddhas. If you do not understand these things, you are not ready to discuss practicing Bagua Boxing, and if you do not act according to these things, you will not be able to obtain Bagua Boxing’s wonders.

第六章 太極拳

CHAPTER SIX: TAIJI BOXING

一則

[HAO WEIZHEN SAID...]

郝為楨先生云練太極拳。有三層之意思。初層練習。身體如在水中。兩足踏地。周身與手足動作如有水之阻力。第二層練習。身體手足動作。如在水中而兩足已浮起不著地。如長泅者浮游其間皆自如也第三層練習。身體愈輕靈。兩足如在水面上行到此時之景況。心中戰戰兢兢如臨深淵。如履薄冰。心中不敢有一毫放肆之意。神氣稍為一散亂。即恐身體沈下也。拳經云。神氣四肢。總要完整。一有不整。身必散亂。必至偏倚。而不能有靈活之妙用。即此意也。又云知己工夫。在練十三式若欲知人須有伴侶二人。每日打四手即捧捋擠按也工久即可知人之虛實輕重隨時而能用矣。倘若無人與自己打手。與一不動之物。當為人用兩手。或身體。與此物相較視定物之中心。或粘或走。或靠。手足總要相合。或如粘住他的意思。或如似挨未挨他的意思。身子內外總要虛空靈活。工久身體亦可以能靈活矣。或是自己與一個能活動之物。物之動去我可以隨着物之來去以兩手接隨之。身體曲伸往來。上下相隨。內外一氣。如同與人相較一般。仍是求不即不離。不丟不頂之意也。如此心思會悟。身體力行。工久引進落空之法亦可以隨心所欲而用之也。此是自己用工。無有伴侶之法則也。郝為楨先生。與陳秀峯先生。所練之架子不同。而應用之法術。同者極多。所不同者。各有心得之處或不一也。

In practicing Taiji Boxing, there is the concept of three stages.

In the beginning stage of training, your body is as if it is in water while your feet are walking on the ground. Your whole body, your hands, and your feet move as if they are feeling the resistance of surrounding water.

In the second stage of training, your body, hands, and feet move as if they are in water, but with your feet floating rather than touching the ground. It is like a long-distance swimmer going for a swim, every action so fluent.

In the third stage of training, your body gets lighter and more agile, and your feet seem to be walking on the surface of water. When you reach this point, you have it in mind to be “fearfully careful, as if standing near a cliff edge or walking on thin ice” [*Book of Poems*, poem 195], and so you do not dare to have even the slightest notions of recklessness. When your spirit and energy become at all in disorder, immediately your body becomes alert to it and sinks down.

It is said in the Boxing Classics [paraphrasing from Essentials of Playing Hands Essentials (by Wu Yuxiang)]: “Your spirit, energy, and limbs should always be integrated. If one part is not in order, your body will be in disorder, inevitably causing you to lean all over the place, and you will be unable to efficiently do anything.” This is exactly the idea.

It is also said [paraphrasing from Essentials of Solo & Partner Practice (by Li Yiyu)]: “The work of knowing yourself lies in the practice of the thirteen dynamics [i.e. the solo set]. If you want to understand opponents, you must have a partner to practice with, every day playing the four techniques (namely: ward-off, rollback, press, and push).” After training for a long time, you can know where the opponent is empty or full, light or heavy, and at any moment you can make use of it.

If there is no one to work with, exercise the techniques on your own with an unmoving object in place of an opponent’s hands or body. Watch fixedly on the object’s center. Whether sticking, yielding, or attacking, your hands and feet should always be harmonized. Sometimes there will be the thought of sticking tightly to it. Sometimes there will be the thought of contact without contact. Your body inside and out should always be empty and nimble, and after a long period of training, your body will be able to be so.

If it is between self and a moving object, when the object moves, I can follow its “attacks”, using my hands to connect and follow, my body bending and extending, coming and going, my upper body and lower coordinating with each other, my inside and out acting together. Just as if there is actually somebody there to compete with, I maintain the intentions of neither nearing nor separating, neither coming away nor crashing in.

By this means, what your mind realizes, your body will perform. After training over a long period the methods of drawing in [the object / “opponent”] to miss you, then you will be able to do whatever you want. This is my own experience in the methods of not having a partner.

(Hao Weizhen and Chen Xiufeng practiced different solo sets, but the practical applications of their arts are abundantly similar. Where there are differences, it is because what they learned from individual experience was different.)

一則

[CHEN XIUFENG SAID...]

陳秀峯先生。言太極八卦。與六十四卦。即手足四幹四枝共六十四卦也。其理八卦拳學言之詳矣與程廷華先生。言遊身八卦並六十四卦。兩派之形式用法不同。其理則一也。陳秀峯先生。所用太極八卦。或粘。或走。或剛。或柔。並散手之用。總是在不即不離內求玄妙。不丟不頂中討消息。以至引進落空。四兩撥千斤動作所發之神氣。如長江大海。滔滔不絕也。此拳之道理王宗岳先生所著太極拳經論之最詳程廷華先生。所用之遊身八卦。或粘或走。或開或合。或離或即。或頂或丟。忽隱忽現。或忽然一離。相去一丈餘遠。忽然而回。即在目前。或用全體之力。或用一手。或二指。或一指之一節。忽虛忽實。忽剛忽柔。無有定形。變化不測形意八卦太極三家。諸位先生所練之形式不同。其理皆合其應用亦各有所當也。

Chen Xiufeng spoke of Taiji’s eight trigrams and the sixty-four hexagrams: “The hands and feet, the four trunks, and the four branches total sixty-four hexagrams.” (The theory of the sixty-four hexagrams was detailed in *A Study of Bagua Boxing*.)

[The parenthetical comment from Sun is somewhat odd, considering his sixty-four hexagram theory is different from Chen’s. Chen Xiufeng’s concept seems to be the permutations of the interrelationships of the “four trunks” (upper limbs), the “the four branches” (lower limbs) and the hands and feet (which we could perhaps refer to as the “four twigs”). Thus the sixty-four hexagram theory for Chen is that $4 \times 4 \times 4 = 64$. Sun’s theory from his Bagua manual is both more complicated and less sophisticated: “The four arms and legs each have two joints (i.e. elbow/knee, wrist/ankle): $4 \times 2 = 8$. There are twenty fingers and toes. The thumbs and big toes each have two joints: $4 \times 2 = 8$. The other sixteen fingers and toes each have three joints: $16 \times 3 = 48$. Add the eight for the arms and legs, and the eight for the joints of the thumbs and big toes: $48 + 8 + 8 = 64$.”]

Cheng Tinghua talked of Swimming-Body Bagua with its sixty-four hexagrams: “The postures and

applications of the two systems [Bagua and Taiji] are different but their theory is the same.” [Sun risks derailing his Taiji chapter by leading into further discussion of Bagua, but he seems to be doing this as an opportunity to compare some theory, Chen and Cheng saying similar things about two different systems, rather than presenting a segment specifically about Taiji. This may also be part of the reason Chen was given no bio in Chapter Three, seeing as his teachings are not really given the spotlight here.]

Chen Xiufeng on the usage of Taiji’s eight trigrams [i.e. the four primary techniques and the four secondary techniques]: “Sometimes sticking, sometimes yielding, sometimes hard, sometimes soft.” And on their function in sparring: “Always it is a matter of seeking the subtlety of neither nearing nor separating, of studying the concept of neither crashing in nor coming away. Once you draw the opponent off balance, four ounces moves a thousand pounds. When your movement expresses your spirit and energy, it is like ‘river flowing into ocean, on and on ceaselessly’”. (The most detailed discussion of this boxing theory is Wang Zongyue’s Taiji Boxing Treatise.)

Cheng Tinghua on the usage of Swimming Body Bagua: “Sometimes sticking, sometimes yielding, sometimes expanding, sometimes contracting, sometimes separating, sometimes nearing, sometimes crashing in, sometimes coming away. Suddenly disappear, suddenly appear, sometimes suddenly separating so that you are apart from each other by more than ten feet, then suddenly returning, closing right up in front of his eyes. Sometimes use the power of your whole body, sometimes use one finger, sometimes two fingers, sometimes just one joint of one finger. Be suddenly empty, suddenly full, suddenly hard, suddenly soft, with no defined shape, transforming unpredictably.”

As for all these teachers of the three schools of Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji: the postures they practice are different, but their theories all merge, and their applications are according to circumstances. [Sun now switches gears again, no longer Taiji, nor even Bagua, but an abrupt attempt to sum up chapters four through six.]

第七章 形意拳譜摘要

CHAPTER SEVEN: SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM XINGYI BOXING MANUALS

拳經云。形意拳之道有七拳。八字。二總。三毒。五惡。六猛。六方。八要。十目。十三格。十四打法。十六練法。九十一拳。一百零三鎗之論。恐後來學者。未見過拳經。不知有此。故述之以明其義。

It says in the Boxing Classics: “In the method of Xingyi Boxing, there are the seven fists, the eight terms, the two chiefs, the three venoms, the five cruelties, the six ferocities, the six directions, the eight essentials, the ten eyes, the thirteen patterns, the fourteen attacking methods, the sixteen parts of training, the ninety-one boxing techniques, and the hundred and three spear techniques.” I fear that later students who have not read the Boxing Classics will not understand what is here. Thus I relate this in order to bring some of its ideas to light.

七拳

The seven fists:

頭肩肘手胯膝足共七拳。也

head, shoulder, elbow, hand, hip, knee, foot.

八字

The eight terms:

斬劈拳也截攢拳也裏橫拳也胯。崩拳也挑踐拳也即燕形也頂炮拳也雲鼉形拳也領。蛇形拳也

- [1] Cleaving (as in the chopping technique)
- [2] Checking (as in the drilling technique)
- [3] Wrapping (as in the crossing technique)
- [4] Lunging (as in the crashing technique)
- [5] Carrying (as in the swallow’s running punch)
- [6] Hoisting (as in the blasting technique)
- [7] Clouding (as in the alligator technique)
- [8] Leading (as in the snake technique)

二總

The two chiefs:

三拳三棍為二總三拳是天地人生法無窮。三棍是天地人生生不已。

The three boxing techniques [drilling, wrapping, running] and the three staff techniques [crashing, blasting, reversing] are the two chiefs [i.e. the three major techniques you will fall back on for a fistfight and the three for a duel with staffs]. (The three boxing techniques are as sky, ground, and mankind, generating methods without end. The three staff techniques also are sky, ground, and mankind, piling it on nonstop.)

三毒

The three venoms:

三拳三棍精熟即為三毒。

When you are well-versed in the three boxing techniques and the three staff techniques, they are each called the “three venoms”.

五惡

The five evils:

得其五精。即為五惡。

Obtaining its five essences [i.e. becoming proficient with the five elements techniques], they are the five cruelties.

六猛

The six ferocities:

六合練成。即為六猛。

Once the six unions have been fully trained, they are called the six ferocities.

六方

The six directions:

內外合一家。為六方。

When inside and outside are merged into a single unit [i.e. when the three internal unions and the three external unions are joined together], they make the six directions [i.e. making you complete to the front, back, left, right, up, down].

八要

The eight essentials:

心定神寧。神寧。心安。心安清淨。清淨無物。無物氣行。氣行絕象。絕象覺明。覺明則神氣相通萬氣歸根矣

[1] With your mind stable, your spirit will be calm.

[2] With your spirit calm, your mind will be at peace.

[3] With your mind at peace, there will be tranquility.

[4] With tranquility, there will be emptiness.

[5] Through emptiness, energy will move.

[6] When energy moves, it will cut away image.

[7] With image cut away, you will feel enlightened.

[8] With a sense of enlightenment, spirit and energy will be linked with each other and all energies will return to the source.

十目

The ten eyes:

即十目所視之意。

This means the intention of the vision. [i.e. Look so intently it is as though you are gazing with a great many eyes.]

十三格

The thirteen patterns:

自七拳格起。至士農工商為十三格。

The patterns begin from the seven fists, and when they reach to scholars, farmers, laborers, and merchants, they become the “thirteen patterns”. [I have no explanation for this.]

十四打法

The fourteen parts of attacking:

手肘肩膀膝足左右共十二拳頭為一拳臀尾為一拳共十四拳名為七拳故有十四處打法此十四處打法變之則有萬法合之則為五行兩儀而仍歸一氣也

The hands, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, and feet, make twelve fists. Add your head, which makes a fist, and your buttocks, which makes another, and the total is now fourteen. They are called the “seven fists”, although there are fourteen parts to strike with. [The buttocks are not mentioned as an eighth fist probably because the seven can all strike forward at the same time, whereas attacking with the buttocks requires an angle change that would reduce the involvement of other parts.] In the varying of these fourteen attacking parts, there are countless techniques. In blending them together, the five elements and dual aspects return again to being a single energy.

十六處練法

The sixteen-part training method:

一寸。二踐。三躡。四就。五夾。六合。七齊。八正。九脛。十警。十一起落。十二進退。十三陰陽。十四五行。十五動靜。十六虛實。

寸足步也踐腿也躡身也就束身也夾如加剪之加也合內外六合心與意合意與氣合氣與力合是為內三合肩與足〔膀〕合肘與膝合手與足合是為外三合齊疾毒也內外如一正直也看正却是斜看斜却是正脛手摩內五行也驚驚起四稍也火機一發物必落磨脛磨脛意氣響連聲起落起是去也落是打也起亦打落亦打起落如水之翻浪纔成起落進退進是步低退是步高進退不是枉學藝陰陽看陰而却有陽看陽而却有陰天地陰陽相合能以下雨拳術陰陽相合纔能打人成其一塊皆

為陰陽之氣也五行內五行要動外五行要隨動靜靜為本體動為作用若言其靜未漏其機若言其動未見其迹動靜是發而未發之間謂之動靜也虛實虛是精也實是靈也精靈皆有成其虛實拳經歌曰精養靈根氣養神養功養道見天真丹田養就長命寶萬兩黃金不與人

1. Inching, 2. Running, 3. Drilling, 4. Bringing in, 5. Squeezing in, 6. Union, 7. Pressure, 8. Straightness, 9. Scraping, 10. Surprise, 11. Lifting & dropping, 12. Advancing & retreating, 13. The passive & active aspects, 14. The five elements, 15. Movement & stillness, 16. Emptiness & fullness.

[1] Inching has to do with the stepping action of your foot.

[2] Running has to do with the stepping action of your leg.

[3] Drilling has to do with the stepping action of your torso.

[4] Bringing in has to do with binding up your body.

[5] Squeezing in is like the closing of scissors [as your legs pinch together forward and back].

[6] Union means the six unions, internally and externally. Mind is united with the intention, the intention united with the energy, and the energy united with the power. These are the three internal unions. The shoulder is united with the hip, the elbow united with the knee, and the hand united with the foot. These are the three external unions.

[7] Pressure means that your urgency is venomous, and that inside and outside are as one.

[8] Straightness has to do with directness of orientation. Observing your posture head-on, it would look askew. Observing your posture diagonally, it would look straightened. [In the three-substance posture, what gives your left hand and left foot their forwardness is your torso facing forty-five degrees to the right.]

[9] Scraping has to do with the friction of your hands during the five elements techniques.

[10] Surprise has to do with the jolt through your limbs. As with a shot from a cannon, your opponent will fall, scraped aside. But though he has been rubbed out, your intention and energy echo on.

[11] Lifting and dropping:

Lifting is going out and dropping is striking, but when lifting is also striking, dropping is still striking. When lifting and dropping are like water in overturning waves, then you have fulfilled lifting and dropping.

[12] Advancing and retreating:

Advancing is with the step low [digging your foot in], retreating is with the step high [lifting your foot out]. Unless you advance and retreat correctly, you have learned this art in vain.

[13] The passive and active aspects:

Seeing the passive, yet there is the active. Seeing the active, yet there is the passive. When the sky and ground, the passive and active, join with each other, rain falls. In this boxing art, when the passive and active combine, you can attack an opponent and become one with him. Always it is the energies of passive and active.

[14] The five elements:

It is internally that the five elements should move. Externally they should merely be following along [with the internal movement].

[15] Movement and stillness:

Stillness is the fundamental form. In movement lies the function. To explain stillness, it means you are not telegraphing the moment you will act. To describe movement, it means nothing of what you have just done was seen. Movement and stillness are therefore the moment between not yet expressing and having expressed.

[16] Emptiness and fullness:

Emptiness has to do with your essential spirit. Fullness has to do with your enlivened spirit. Essential and enlivened together are the emptiness and fullness. Its song in the Boxing Classic goes:

Essence nourishes virtue, energy nourishes spirit.

In cultivating the skill and the Way, you will see Nature's truth.

When your elixir field is nurtured, it brings the treasure of long life.

A thousand pounds of gold is not wealth when compared to your body.

九十一拳

The ninety-one boxing techniques:

三拳分為二十一拳。五行生剋是十拳。分為七十拳。共九十一拳一拳分為七拳是前打後打左打右打不打打打不打打打

The three boxing techniques separate into twenty-one. The five elements generating and overcoming each other makes ten techniques, which then separate into seventy. $21+70 =$ ninety-one boxing techniques. [The reason for the separating into these sevens is because] one technique divides into seven versions, which are: striking forward, striking to the rear, striking to the left, striking to the right, not striking by striking, striking by not striking, and striking by striking.

一百零三鎗

The hundred and three spear techniques:

天地人三鎗各分四柱。是三四一十二鎗。五行五鎗。是五七三十五鎗。八卦八鎗。是七八五十六鎗。共一百零三鎗也。

Sky, ground, and mankind makes three spears, each separating into four “pillars”. $3 \times 4 =$ twelve spears. The five elements techniques makes five spears. $5 \times 7 =$ thirty-five spears [going by the same separation into sevens as with the boxing techniques]. The eight trigrams makes eight spears. $8 \times 7 =$ fifty-six spears. $12+35+56 =$ a hundred and three spear techniques.

頭打落。意隨足走。起而未起占中央。腳踏中門搶他位。就是神仙亦難防。

肩打一陰反一陽。兩手只在洞中藏。左右全憑盖他意。舒展二字一命亡。

肘打去意占胸膛。起手好似虎撲羊。或在裏。撥一旁。走後手。只在脇下藏。

拳打三節不見形、如見形影不為能。能在一思盡。莫在一思存。能在一氣先。莫在一氣後。

胯打中節並相連。陰陽相合得之難。外胯好似魚打挺。裏胯藏步變勢難。

膝打幾處人不明。好似猛虎出木籠。和身轉着不停勢。左右明撥任意行。

脚打採意不落空。消息全憑後脚蹬。與人較勇無虛備。去意好似捲地風。

臀尾打起落不見形。好似猛虎坐臥出洞中。

Attacking with your head, it lifts and drops along with the stepping of your foot, lifting and yet not lifting, for it occupies the center. As your foot stamps through the doorway, snatching the position, you project so much spirit it is difficult for the opponent to defend against.

Attacking with your shoulder, one side is passive to balance the other which is active, while your hands are stored away in the hollows. Using either your left shoulder or right, it is entirely a matter of smothering his capacity, for you are to “bind” up then “spread” out, and in those two words is one command for him: flee!

Attacking with your elbow, the intention is to take possession of his chest, the lifting hand wishing to be a tiger pouncing on a lamb. Or if it goes inward, turning to one side, your rear hand stays below your ribs.

Attacking with your fists, be invisible in all three parts, like looking at something and not being able to see even its shadow. [i.e. Whether the fist is extending, retracting, or twisting, it is all too quick to see.] It can be that a thought finishes, but not that a thought lingers, and that an energy was there before it was thought of, but

not after.

Attacking with your hip, it is coordinated with your torso, for when your passive and active aspects are joined together, it is difficult for him to catch you. The outer hip bumping is much like the flopping of a fish, and the inner hip bumps with your step and is a situation which is hard for him to adapt to.

Attacking with your knee, it goes to several places your opponent will not see, and it will be like a fierce tiger leaving a wooden cage. It takes but a gentle turn of your body and the power will go unhalting, spreading cleanly to either side as your intention dictates.

Attacking with your foot, stomp with an intention of not coming down fruitlessly, its placement depending entirely on the pressing of your rear foot. When you compete with courageous opponents, be not unprepared, and send your intention out like wind rolling over the ground.

Attacking with your buttocks, lift and drop invisibly, like a fierce tiger crouching in a cave, ready to spring out.

拳經云混元一氣吾道成。道成莫外五真形。真形內藏真精神。神藏氣內丹道成。如問真形須求真。要知真形合真象。真象合來有真訣。真訣合道得徹靈。養靈根而動心者。敵將也。養靈根而靜心者。修道也。

It says in the Boxing Classics:

“From the primeval oneness is our method made, and in the method is nothing beyond the five true forms. Stored within these forms is essential spirit, and stored within this spirit is the energy of the elixirist ways.

“If you wonder how we are to get to the authenticity of the true forms, you must understand that the true forms merge in an authentic relationship. From this authentic relationship comes genuine skill, and as the genuineness of the skill merges with the Way, your realization builds to the revelatory.

“To nurture your virtue by rousing your mind is a matter of dealing with opponents. To nurture your virtue by bestilling your mind is a matter of cultivating the Way.”

赤肚子胎息訣云氣穴之間昔人名之曰生門死戶又謂天地之根凝神於此久之元氣日充元神日旺神旺則氣暢氣暢則血融血融則骨強骨強則髓滿髓滿則腹盈腹盈則下實下實則行步輕健動作不疲四體康健顏色如桃李去仙不遠矣此亦是拳術內勁之意義也

The “Formula for Breathing Like a Newborn Baby” says: “The ancients deemed the energy points to be the ‘gateways of life and death’ and also the ‘roots of the world’. Concentrating your spirit into them over a long period, your primordial vitality will daily fill and your primordial spirit will daily flourish. With your spirit flourishing, your energy will be unimpeded. With your energy unimpeded, your blood will flow. With your blood flowing, your bones will be strengthened. With your bones strengthened, your marrow will be full of potency. With your marrow potent, your abdomen will feel full. With your abdomen full, you will lower solidly. Lowering solidly, you will step nimbly. With your movements energized, your body will be healthy, your complexion will be like peaches and plums, and longevity will not be far off.” This is the same idea as with the boxing art’s internal power.

第八章

CHAPTER EIGHT:

練拳經驗及三派之精意

MY EXPERIENCE OF PRACTICING BOXING ARTS & THE ESSENTIAL CONCEPT WITHIN THE THREE

[PART 1 – MY EXPERIENCE OF PRACTICE]

余自幼練拳以來。聞諸先生之言。云拳即是道。余聞之懷疑。至練暗勁。剛柔合一。動作靈妙。一任心之自然。與同道人研究。彼此各有所會。惟練化勁之後。內中消息。與同道之人言之。知者多不肯言。不知者茫然莫解。故筆之於書。以示同道。倘有經此景況者。可以互相研究。以歸至善。余練化勁所經者。每日練一形之式。到停式時。立正。心中神氣一定。每覺下部海底處。即陰蹻穴處如有物萌動初不甚着意。每日練之有動之時。亦有不動之時。日久亦有動之甚久之時。亦有不動之時。漸漸至於停式。心中一定。如欲泄漏者。想丹書坐功。有真陽發動之語。可以採取。彼是靜中動。練靜坐者。知者亦頗多。乃彼是靜中求動也。此是拳術動中求靜。不知能消化否。又想拳經亦有處處行持不可移之言。每日功夫總不間斷。以後練至一停式。周身就有發空之景象。真陽亦發動。而欲泄。此情形似柳華〔陽〕先生所云。復覺真元之意思也。自覺身子一毫亦不敢動。動即要泄矣心想仍用拳術之法以化之。內中之意。虛靈下沉注於丹田。下邊用虛靈之意。提住穀道。內外之意思。仍如練拳蹬〔蹻〕子一般。意注於丹田片時。陽即收縮。萌動者上移於丹田矣。此時周身融和。綿綿不斷。當時尚不知採取轉法輪之理。而丹田內。如同兩物相爭狀況。四五小時。方漸漸安靜。心想不動之理。是余練拳術之時。呼吸之息。仍在丹田之中。至於不練之時。雖言談呼吸。並不防碍內中之真息、並非有意存。照是無時不然也。莊子云。真人之呼吸以踵。大約即此意也。因有不息而息之火。將此動物消化。暢達於周身也。以後又如前動作。仍提在丹田。仍是練拳蹻子。內外總是一氣。緩緩悠悠練之。不敢有一毫之不平穩處。動作練時。內中四肢融融。綿綿虛空。與前站着之景況無異。亦有練一蹻而不動者。亦有練二蹻而不動者。嗣後亦有動時。仍提至丹田。而用練拳之內呼吸。轉法輪用意主之於丹田。以神用息而轉之。從尾閭。至夾脊。至玉枕。至天頂而下。與靜坐功夫相同。下至丹田。亦有二三轉而不動者。亦有三四轉而不動者。所轉者。與所練蹻子。消化之意相同。以後有不練之時。或坐立。或行動。內中仍以用練拳之呼吸。身子行路亦可以消化矣。以後甚至於睡熟。內中忽動。動而即醒。仍以用練拳之呼吸。而消化之。以後睡熟而內中不動。內外周身四肢。忽然似空。周身融融和和。如沐如浴之景況。睡時亦有如此情形。而夢中亦能。用神意呼吸。而化之。因醒後。已知夢中之情形而化之也。以後練拳術睡熟時。內中即不動矣。後只有睡熟時。內外忽然有虛空之時。白天行止坐臥。四肢亦有發空之時。身中之情意。異常舒暢。每逢晚上。練過拳術。夜間睡熟時。身中發虛空之時多。晚上要不練拳術。睡時發空空〔虛空〕之時較少。以後知丹道有氣消之弊病。自己體察內外之情形。人道縮至甚小。消除百病。精神有增無減。以後靜坐亦如此、練拳亦如此。到此方知拳術與丹道是一理也。以上是余練拳術。自己身體內外之所經驗也。故書之以告同志。

I have practiced boxing arts since my youth. I had heard every teacher say that these boxing arts are Daoist arts. I was doubtful whenever I heard this until I had progressed to training the hidden energy. Hardness and softness had merged into one, movement felt miraculous, and it became spontaneous and natural.

Discussing it with my fellow students, we each knew something about it. However, once I had moved on to training the neutral energy, the quality of discussion about my new internal condition had changed. Those who understood the experience were often less willing to talk about it, and those who knew nothing about it would not stop talking about it. For that reason, I have put pen to paper in order to reveal it to my fellows. For those of you who have passed through to such a condition, by sharing with each other we can mutually achieve perfection.

When I trained to develop the neutral energy, at the finish of each day's practice of postures I would stand straight and think of my spirit and energy settling. Each time, I felt something down in my root chakra (also called the Yin Jiao acupoint). [Yin Jiao means “where the passive energy is quickened”. This is again still the same place as Hui Yin, meaning similarly “where the passive energy gathers”. There are three names for the same place because of three traditions: in Chinese medicine it is called Hui Yin (“Gathering Place of the

Passive”), Daoists named it Yin Jiao (“Passive Quickened”), and Buddhists named it Hai Di (“Under the Sea”).] It was like a plant sprouting, and in the beginning I did not pay it much attention.

In my daily practice, there were times when the sensation would be there, other times when I felt nothing at all. In the course of time, there were occasions when the sensation lasted very long, as well as other times in which there was again no sensation. Gradually, once in the finishing posture and thinking on settling, it seemed like it was there but on the verge of going away. I thought of what the *Elixir Book* says about seated meditation: “Your true active aspect activates.” I made use of this idea, which to elixirists is a matter of movement within stillness.

Among those who practice seated meditation, there are a great many who understand the idea of seeking movement within stillness. In the case of boxing arts, what is sought is stillness within movement, but I am not sure how that can be communicated. I also thought upon this phrase from the Boxing Classics: “Always the exercise is to be maintained and never allowed to slip away.” I trained every day, never skipping a day.

Eventually in the training, from the moment I was in the finishing posture my whole body went into a condition of emptiness. My true active aspect would also activate, but would be on the verge of going away. Such a state is what Liu Huayang meant by “returning to a sense of the true primordial state”. I became aware of my body’s smallest movement, and I dared not to move at all, for if I moved it would go away.

I thought if I returned to the method in the boxing, it would adjust the situation. My intention within was of sinking naturalness down to my elixir field, while underneath also using an intention of naturalness to lift up my rectum. The idea inside and out was now just like when practicing the boxing. Then the moment my intention focused on my elixir field, the active aspect promptly shrank in upward and resprouted there. My whole body was now pleasantly warm and stayed so continuously. [In short, what Sun had discovered here is the simple but crucial principle that if you are sticking your butt out, your energy will seem to leak away, but if you slightly tuck your tailbone in, you will feel full of power.]

I did not yet know about the principle of rotating the dharma wheel, but it was all going on there within my elixir field, like two things in a state of competing with each other. [A dharma wheel rotation is the active energy moving up the Du meridian in the back and the passive energy moving down the Ren meridian in front, and the elixir field is where the exchange of passive and active takes place.] Then after four or five hours like that, finally they were at peace.

It seemed to me that the cause of such stillness was that from when I was practicing the boxing, the essential breath had remained in my elixir field. Even when I was not practicing, despite even the breathing of conversation, the true breath within was not hindered at all. Indeed I was not trying to deliberately cause such an effect, but there was no moment when it was not so. Zhuangzi said [*Zhuangzi*, chapter 6]: “An authentic man breathes with his heels.” This is essentially the idea, and this engine of there being breath without my mind being on the breath drove the activity of the active aspect to be absorbed and to smoothly reach to every part of my body.

I thereafter repeated the process as before, again rousing my elixir field, again going through my practice routine of boxing postures. With my inside and outside always a single continuum, I slowly and leisurely practiced, not allowing the slightest bit of unevenness anywhere. As I practiced, within and to my extremities it was harmonious, a continuous emptiness, and then the situation once I was standing in the finishing posture was no different from before.

There were times when I would go through my practice routine and then feel nothing, times when I would go through my routine twice and still feel nothing. But subsequently when there was something happening, I would again lift it to my elixir field and then use the boxing art’s internal breathing to rotate the dharma wheel, my

intention focusing on my elixir field.

Breathing mindfully, I rotated the wheel along its course from my tailbone, to my spine, to my head, to my headtop, and then back down, same as in seated meditation practice, back down to my elixir field. At times I could do only two or three rotations and then the feeling would stop, at times only three or four rotations and then the feeling would stop. The degree of my intent was matched in both cases, the amount of rotations I could manage and the amount of boxing practice I had put in.

Later when I was not practicing, whether I was just sitting, standing, or walking, inside I was still using the breathing of the boxing practice. My body while walking could still process it. Later on it happened even when I was sleeping deeply. There would be a sudden stirring within, which immediately woke me. I again used the breathing from practicing the boxing to absorb it. I then slept soundly, and inside there was no movement. Inside and out, my whole body to its extremities suddenly felt like a void. My whole body was as harmoniously contented as if I was taking a bath.

Sometimes when this situation happened in my sleep, I was able in my dream to mindfully breathe and thereby absorb it. After I woke up, I was aware that it had happened and had been dealt with in my dream.

After practicing the boxing, I slept soundly and there was stillness within. Eventually I only had to fall asleep for my inside and out to suddenly slip into a period of emptiness. During the day, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, my limbs also experienced periods of such emptiness, and the sensation within my body was extraordinarily comfortable. Every evening, I practiced the boxing, and then while I was asleep in the night, my body often slipped into a state of emptiness. Although if I did not practice in the evening, the emptiness during sleep would occur less regularly.

Later on I understood that elixirism has an energy which dispels ailments. My own personal experiences and observations of internal and external conditions were that typical human problems become inconsequential, all illnesses are cast off, and vitality is increased. After doing seated meditation in this way and practicing the boxing in this way, I finally understood that boxing arts and elixirism share the same principles.

This has been my personal experience, internal and external, of practicing boxing arts. I have written it down for the purpose of further clarifying for my comrades.

[PART 2 – THE ESSENTIAL CONCEPT WITHIN THE THREE: UNCONSCIOUS AWARENESS]

拳術至練虛合道。是將真意化到至虛至無之境。不動之時。內中寂然。空虛無一動其心。至於忽然有不測之事。雖不見不聞。而能覺而避之。中庸云。至誠之道。可以前知。是此意也。能到至誠之道者。三派拳術中。余知有四人而已。形意拳李洛能先生。八卦拳董海川先生。太極拳楊露禪先生。武禹讓先生。四位先生。皆有不見不聞之知覺。其餘諸先生。皆是見聞之知覺而已。如外有不測之事。只要眼見耳聞。無論來者如何疾快。俱能躲閃。因其功夫入於虛境而未到於至虛。不能有不見不聞之知覺也。其練他派拳術者。亦常聞有此境界。未能詳其姓氏。故未錄之。

Boxing arts are ultimately a means of practicing emptiness and thereby joining with the Way. This is the true meaning of transforming into a condition of perfect emptiness and perfect nothingness. When not moving, there is silence within, emptiness without a single movement in your mind. When something unexpected suddenly happens, even if you neither see it nor hear it, you can nevertheless sense it and evade it. The *Zhong Yong* says: “By the way of total sincerity, one can know what is about to happen.” It is this idea.

Of those who were able to attain the “way of total sincerity” in these three boxing arts, I know of only four. In Xingyi Boxing, there was Li Nengran. In Bagua Boxing, there was Dong Haichuan. In Taiji Boxing, there was Yang Luchan and Wu Yuxiang. These four men were all conscious of the unseen and unheard. Other teachers all

perceive with their eyes and ears, and when something unexpected suddenly happens to them, they only have the seeing of their eyes and hearing of their ears to depend on. They can evade all attacks no matter how fast, for their skills have achieved a condition of emptiness, yet because they have not attained perfect emptiness, they are incapable of being aware without seeing or hearing.

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